MILDEW MANSE

BELLE·K·MANIATES

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I called them in and read the letter. FRONTISPIECE.
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BY

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AMARILLY OF CLOTHES-LINE ALLEY, ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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MILDEW MANSE

March 25th.

FATHER-DEAR:

HERE am I, Little Jumping Joan, as you used to call me, in a city far away from that four by nine place where you and Mark left me. I can see your look of consternation and hear your guarded gutterals, but read farther and you will see that I have landed on my feet — steady little feet, you always said. You will also see that I am better housed and homed than I was in that halfway hamlet on the hillside.

You know I never could stay "put" anywhere. The wanderlust which sent you to Northern Alaska to recuperate our fallen fortunes brought me here. I'd rather be an agile ashcat in an alley than a lonely lily in the field, anyway; and then, too, daddy dear, I want to be a help instead of the hindrance I've always been to you.

I couldn't let you split even with me when you need so much money for our gold-dredging proposition, so I put three-quarters of the amount you left for me in a package and gave it to Mark to deliver to you after leaving Seattle.

Right here let me tell you not to expend too much sympathy on Mark. He didn't go with you to the wilds of Alaska on account of a broken heart, but because — well, that is his story. And don't delude yourself with the hope that absence will make the heart grow fonder. It never does; not a healthy heart, anyway.

No; you and I have feasted and famined together for twenty years and lived in many air-castles, but we have now come down to earth — I mean sand, and whether it sifts gold or is only good for footprints, I want no shining Mark — only my dear young daddy.

You know you promised that this was to be our last flyer at a fortune and, win or lose, you'd settle down with me to a hearth and home life.

To return to my running jump: I made up my mind to exchange the peace of the

pastures for the turmoil of town and become a little self-supporter. Inventory of my qualifications towards this end was not encouraging. I am not of the one-talent kind, you know, but "flutter in all ways and fly in none." I can sew a little, embroider less, play the piano improperly and run a typewriter, but never made the word-signs in shorthand and never shall, so I was in doubt what to try my hand at, until I recalled what you said to Mark the other day — that times are changing and that nowadays people make a living more by their wits than by brains or labor, so I set my wits to working.

My light refused to shine; it seemed to be a dark lantern until there came a flashlight which showed me how to capitalize my semi-speciality and I decided to open a Bureau of Suggestions. Like you I am no advocate of grass-growing, and I hastened to come here where I knew just one person, Mrs. Munk, our ex-housekeeper, sole survivor of that brief halcyon time when we had "maids in plenty." Fortunately we have always kept up a Christmas card communication, so I knew her address. Like

the Little Old Woman called Nothing-At-All, she lived in a dwelling exceedingly small, but her door opened invitingly wide to me. She looks just as she used to, plump and billowy of form. Do you remember that Mark always referred to her as the feather-bed?

She couldn't grasp our change of fortune and I had hard work to convince her that our one and only prosperity period was a thing of the past. I told her of your Alaskan enterprise and she was quite impressed, believing it to be a gold mine. When I explained that it was in the sands you were building your hopes, she thought I meant something in masonry and told me a long rigmarole about her son having taken the third degree. Then I was the one that was muddled, as I had a hazy idea that third degrees had to do with the quizzing of witnesses or criminals. Finally we got the sand puzzle solved, though she is rather pessimistic as to your prospects. Said she had heard of people warding off the wolf by sifting ashes but had never heard of sifting sand.

When I told her of my plan, she looked

upon it simply as one of the visionary fads of the idle rich. The only thing about it that appealed to her practicality was the fact that it required no capital. She prophesied suspension of the "Bureau" within a week.

The place to establish it, I told her, was where there would be a great many people coming and going.

"A railway station," she promptly offered.

"No"; I objected. "People going are in a last minute rush, and those coming are bent only on securing — or dodging — the cabbies."

"A church, then."

"People don't spend much money on Sundays," I reminded her. "Besides they are too lazy on the Seventh Day to care for suggestions about anything."

At last I selected a restaurant as the best locality. After eating, people are good-natured and generous. Before eating they are philosophical and inquiring. I could get them both ways.

"If it is a restaurant you want, I know the very place," she declared. "There is a new one opened on First Street, and they

have a vacant space to let across from the cashier and cigar stand. It was to have been a candy counter, but the proprietor of the restaurant was afraid it might keep his customers from ordering desserts. He said they would buy candy instead of pie."

She went down with me to see the proprietor. He had an Olympic name which I cannot spell tonight, and he regarded my proposition in the light of a joke, but as Mark says, "Cash down talks," for when I handed him a month's rent in advance, his viewpoint was completely changed.

"She's a good looker," I heard him say apologetically to his partner, also Olympic — who seemed to be hanging back on the deal, "and it will be a novelty and so a sort of ad for us."

"But," the partner further remonstrated, "the Bureau will bust and she'll quit when her month's up. We want to get some one who will stick."

"She won't quit. The fat woman says she can afford to lose."

That settled it and I was O.K.'d by the firm. I went into my business venture as you have done so many times with the sup-

port of only my own convictions but with plenty of wet blankets hurled at me.

From the restaurant I went to a printer's, a sign painter's and a second-hand store. At this last named place I bought a desk, screen and two chairs, Mrs. Munk outjewing the Jew in cinching the bargain.

The next morning the patrons of the restaurant seemed interested and amused — two good omens in trade—by the artistically lettered sign above my desk:

"Bureau of Suggestions."

Some lingered to read the placards I had conspicuously displayed:

"? ? ? ? ? Answered while you wait."

"Suggestions given in business, personal and domestic affairs."

"Ask and you shall receive answer, if matter is within the knowledge of the Bureau. If not, no fee."

"Hints are Handy."

"A Word to the Wise."

"A Step in Time saves many."

"Suggestions only twenty-five cents."

My first customer was a brisk young business man whose object seemed to be amusement rather than information.

"I have just opened a tea and coffee store," he announced flippantly. "Can you give me a suggestion as to a good drawing card to catch customers?"

"Where is your place of business located?" I asked in as commercial a tone as I could assume.

"Next to corner of First and High," he replied, appearing somewhat discomfited at my impersonal manner.

"What do you keep besides tea and coffee — anything?" was my next question.

"All kinds fancy crackers, cakes and olives."

He spoke glibly, once more resuming interest in his business affairs in spite of the distractive charms my modish coiffure seemed to hold for him.

I thought for a moment and then I said:

"I know the very thing for you to do — but, will you pay the fee first, please?"

He looked sheepish and quickly produced a quarter of a dollar.

"There is no café in the vicinity of your store." (You see I had "done the town" yesterday.) "Why not serve tea and coffee with wafers at little tables through business

hours? Many housekeepers would be glad of a chance to sample your wares and refresh themselves at the same time. You will find it will be patronized by all shoppers. There will be no expense except a slight recompense to some one to serve, and there will be no loss. Be sure to have thin, dainty cups and saucers, and don't forget slices of lemon for those who don't take sugar."

He looked positively beatific and added three more quarters to the jackpot.

"That's such a simple and bully good scheme I wonder I didn't think of it myself," he exclaimed as he hurried away to carry my plan into execution.

Mrs. Munk, who had come down with me, had been a keen observer of my first deal.

"Miss Joan," she said, "you sure take after your pa for business. How did you ever come to think of such a first-class scheme?"

"That was easy," I assured her. "Every woman is daffy over a tea-room. I wish all my questions might be as simple of solution."

I am not at all sure that I should have accepted his "tip" of the three extra fees, but then I guess he got his money's worth.

I picked up my four quarters with an odd little sensation. The first dollar I had ever earned, shame on me!

I think Mrs. Munk now felt that I was equal to my job without any chaperoning, for she left me, saying she must "hurry home and see the butter girl."

An hour later a rosy-cheeked country lass came up to the Bureau. She proved to be the "butter girl" whom Mrs. Munk had sent to me for help in securing a situation in town as second girl.

I took down her name and qualifications and told her if she'd call in the morning I was sure I'd have something for her. If not, I'd give back her quarter.

I decided to patronize my landlord for luncheon and went to one of the tables before the rush hour was on. I purposely picked a table at which two well dressed women were seated. They were drinking tea and discussing the servant problem. One of them remarked that she was going from the restaurant to an intelligence office to get a housemaid.

I butted in with apologies and told her it would be to her advantage to stop at the

Bureau on her way out, as I could supply her needs for twenty-five cents.

Then I returned to my place of business where she soon followed me.

"Can you really secure me a good housemaid?" she asked sceptically as she handed me the fee.

"Certainly. Myra Lamb, country girl, never worked out, anxious to learn, honest, clean, capable, willing to wear apron and cap, no city acquaintances. She will be here tomorrow morning and I will send her to you if you will leave your address."

"It sounds too good to be true, but I'll take anything in the shape of a human form that you produce."

Some Smart Alecks came up next and one of them laid down a quarter and asked me what color necktie I would suggest for his style of beauty. I wanted to advise "green with a streak of yellow," but I knew that would not be good business, so I looked him over with the appraising eye of a photographer and told him he should never wear anything but grey or black.

Then came a lull and the proprietor sauntered up to my desk. I told him I had a

suggestion for his business which I would give free gratis.

"I notice," I said, "that you have a sheet of extras inserted in your printed menu. It is in almost unreadable handwriting, and the items are all jumbled in together. I agree to keep you supplied with clean, typewritten sheets of extras for all your tables if you'll give me my luncheon and dinner."

The bargain was closed at once. I brought with me your old typewriter on which I did all the gold-dredging correspondence, intending it as a reserve trump in case the "Bureau of Suggestions" didn't pan out.

I went to Mrs. Munk's that night with a hop, skip and jump. Three dollars and grub guaranteed was not bad for a first day's assets. I shall turn most of my cash now on hand into a nest-egg and maybe by the time you come home, I'll have a snug little sum to help build our home-house.

Mrs. Munk had just received a letter from her third degree son who was on his way home from the West. This meant that I must find a room elsewhere. We looked in the advertisements in the evening paper, but found nothing that met with her approval.

"I wish," she said thoughtfully, "that I could get you into Mildew Manse."

"Mildew Manse!" I repeated. "What in the world is that? An institution? It sounds malarial and not very enticing."

"It's an old tumbledown house in the most fashionable part of the city and some people live in it who are unfashionable but as good as gold, and you'd feel at home there. They have loads of spare rooms. They're a nice, jolly lot and you'd never be lonesome."

"Do they take lodgers?"

"No; they'd never do anything so practical as that. It wouldn't occur to them and they need money bad enough, too. I think, maybe, I can work it. They're accommodating and when they know that you're all alone here and your pa away off in Alaska they'll take you in out of pity. They're soft hearted. Every one that has kittens to get rid of drops them in their yard. I'll run up there in the morning and see if I can't put it across. If they'll take you in, Mrs. Haphazard would care for you like you was her own."

"Haphazard! What a funny name!" I exclaimed.

"Their name is really Hazard but they haven't gone by it since the day one of the boys, Haphiram, was asked to write his name on the board. He was in a hurry and he cut it down to H. Hazard. The teacher, who was a new one, asked him what 'H' stood for, and a boy sang out 'Hap Hazard.' He's always been called that since, and then folks got in the habit of referring to them by the nickname which seemed to fit them."

"But why such a dismal name for their house?"

"Well, you see the place is mortgaged clear up to the chimneys and the last time they tried to get something on the furniture, the man who called to look it over wouldn't give anything. He muttered something as he went out about everything being moth-eaten and mildewed. One of the children heard him and told the folks. They ain't at all sensitive, except perhaps Jo, and they make a joke out of everything, so they said they had been trying to think of a good name for the place and this had given them an idea. So it's been Mildew Manse ever since."

The next morning I brought my typewriter down to the Bureau and wrote out

the menu inserts. I had a few customers and the tea and coffee man sent a reporter to write me up for the Sunday edition.

After luncheon Mrs. Munk dropped in to tell me that I had been promised admittance to the coveted lodgings. I closed the Bureau and went up there with her.

I was in love with Mildew Manse as soon as I saw it. There seemed to be no doorbell working, but Mrs. Haphazard saw us coming and let us in. She had a reposeful face and manner with a comfortable and almost childlike air of ease. She took us up to the room I was to occupy — a large, high-ceilinged room big enough for a house with lots of windows in it. There was not much furniture, but the pieces made up in size what they lacked in quantity. The bed reminded me of the biggest one in the house of the Three Bears. I do adore a great, wide bed that I can lose myself in. I would as soon sleep on a closet shelf as on one of those terrible cots that the average roomer clamors for. The bureau with many different sized drawers, a washstand, two old chairs — a grandmother's rocker and a barrel — a round table and an old-fashioned lounge

— not a davenport or a divan or a sofa, but a real lounge, — comprised the furniture. There was a dream of a closet with lots of shelves, hooks and drawers.

I took it all in with one sweeping glance and asked if I might come that night. "Any time," she assured me.

Then I asked the price, at which she seemed to be quite at sea.

"Oh, whatever you think it's worth," she replied. "It doesn't make any difference."

It seemed so heavenly to meet just one person without the bartering instinct foremost. I wished I were rich so I could put a big price on it. I suggested Mrs. Munk as appraiser. She is a good judge of values and as she still believes me to be rich, I knew she would not "do" them in my favor. She named a sum which Mrs. Haphazard thought entirely too high, but I instantly closed the bargain by handing over a month's rent in advance. Then I asked her if she'd mind if I got my breakfast, which would consist only of toast and coffee, in my room.

"Yes, I should mind," she said positively. "I couldn't enjoy my own toast and coffee

— that's all we have besides marmalade — if I knew you were up here eating alone. You'll come down and breakfast with us."

"Oh!" I cried. "May I? I'll pay you any price for a breakfast at a home table."

"I wouldn't think of charging you for that," she began, but Mrs. Munk cut in and said in a decided, clinching tone:

"She'll pay you twenty-five cents a breakfast."

"Whatever will I do with so much money!" exclaimed Mrs. Haphazard, looking really quite overcome by her prospects.

"Do something you never did before," counselled the mundane Munk. "Bank."

"Oh, we have a bank account," replied Mrs. Haphazard half boastingly, half apologetically. "Jo has made a rule — the first one we ever had in our house. We are to keep a deposit of one hundred dollars in the savings-bank for an emergency, or a wet day fund, as Tippy calls it. Jo started it with ten dollars, the rest of the children chipped in and raised five dollars, we sold some old mining stock we thought was worthless for fifty dollars, and now I can soon make up the balance."

When we were outside I asked if Jo were Mrs. Haphazard's husband.

"No"; she replied. "He is the oldest son and the only one of the family who ever shows a streak of common sense. His streaks are thin and far between, like the lean in bacon, though."

I shut up shop early and transferred my trunk to my new home where I have been writing to you all the evening and far into the night. It will be many moons before you read this, for you remember you said to send all letters to Nome, as you didn't know where you would stop for experimental work.

I believe Mark does not intend to correspond with me. He didn't want a sister or a friend, and I don't want a husband. I am glad it has made no difference between you two. If it had, I should have jumped into the river. There is no friendship in the world, I think, like that between a young old man and an old young man when they are not related. It seems more intimate than the relation between father and son.

Now that I've told you how homey I am fixed, I'll say good night. I shall write

often and you will have to take a day off to read and reply when you reach Nome.

Hurry up and make your fortune, or else lose all you have, so we can put out our "at home" sign.

With lots and lots of love, I am

YOUR LITTLE JUMPING JOAN

April 5th.

DEAREST DADDY:

YOUR postal cards en route and your nice long letter from Seattle were forwarded to me. Also Mark's picture card of the Totem Pole, which reminded me very forcibly of himself as I last saw him, towering aggressive and sphinxlike. He didn't write a single syllable save the address. He didn't need to. That Totem Pole was a life-size picture of him and expressed his attitude. I shall send him at Nome a Kodak of the restaurant (interior view).

The Bureau is right on the boom. Sometimes my ingenuity in devising ways and means has been taxed to the limit and then, too, it's rather strenuous to think things right off the reel. The Answer to Correspondents Column business must be a snap with so much time for grinding out advice instead of having to hand out Solomon stuff ready made as I do. I didn't leave my horseshoe at home, however, and I've delivered the goods in every instance with

two exceptions, and even then I was able to refer my customers to the proper place for information.

It's astonishing how many people there are in our Yankee country who "want to know."

My write-up in the paper gave me good publicity (I wanted to add a notice, "Alaska papers, please don't copy") and there has been a run on the Bureau from every conceivable class — rich man, poor man, beggar man, etc. I have laid out trips for travelers, remodelled hats and dresses, encouraged lovers, helped health and beauty seekers, selected cotillion favors and told a girl "how to get a philopena on Billy Lukes."

The people who come to question remain to eat, so the Greeks are also securing a thriving trade. By the way, the proprietor's name is Goudolaris, and he has domestic troubles. His wife comes down between meals to read him the riot act. It isn't a case of when "Greek meets Greek" either, because she is Irish and when the tug of war comes it is brief, Goudolaris falling an easy victor.

So much for my business. Hereafter I shall mention it but briefly, as I keep a

cash book; also a ledger containing a history of the cases, and you can read them on rainy days when we sit by our hearthstone. I have something of far more interest to write about, and that is the happenings of the Haphazard Family. Through my letter you'll come to know them, I hope, and to know them is to love them.

I'll begin by showing you over Mildew Manse. The house is well back from the street and is set in the midst of fruit trees, bushes, flower and vegetable gardens with barn and playground at the rear.

I am told that the fruit trees yield no fruit; the vegetable garden is a lottery, as the labels on the seeds are often misleading, or maybe the little boys are not careful in putting up the packages, but the Haphazards don't mind such trifles. They find pleasure in speculating as to whether the peas will come up beans or something else.

What remains of the barn is an airy structure something like a pergola, but that doesn't matter either, as they have nothing to keep in a barn except stray cats.

The playground is all the name implies and brings "days of real sport" at every

season. There is a swing suspended from a precarious limb of a rotten oak by a rope that shows signs of giving, and you have delightful thrills when you hear the ominous squeaking of the limb and feel a little ecstatic tug as one more strand of the rope ravels. The teeter board is over a hogshead and it revolves at the same time that it goes up and down, something like the rotary movements of the earth; but the little boys assure me that the grass is seldom cut in this part of the yard and it doesn't hurt much to fall. There is also a tottering fence to walk with or without a balancing pole. At present acquatic sports are most in favor. The grounds are three feet below the level of the street and the adjacent gardens, and then the spring rains have been heavy, so the little Haphazards go about on home-made rafts, one of which I helped them to build. In winter the yard becomes a grand skating rink; in spring, a pond.

Mildew Manse is very old, an heirloom from bygone and more prosperous Haphazards. When it became the habitation of the present generation it was entirely

colonial in style. Mr. and Mrs. Wilkie Hazard came here bride and groom. At the birth of their first child they mortgaged and enlarged the house and at each succeeding addition to the family there followed an addition to the house; also a mortgage. The children number six, and "three in the churchyard lie," so you see there are nine annexes, varied in shape, size, material and style. It is really quite an exhibition of the different eras of architecture. The mortgages are also varied. There is a first, a second and a blanket and I don't know what other brands.

In bygone days there was a disposition to make payments on these mortgages, but as the family increased, the interest on the liens followed suit and has now assumed alarming proportions. The Haphazards cheerfully explain, however, that it is just the same as paying rent. When I hint at a future reckoning — they have taken me unreservedly into their confidence as they have into their home — Mrs. Haphazard philosophically urges that there is no such thing as a future. "You can't catch up to it," she argues. "It's an illusion — a will

o' the wisp — the message of the morrow. Why bother about what never comes?"

We'll now go up the broad front steps to the main entrance; that is, the main part of the first part. We can't ring the bell, because there is none. There used to be one of the old-fashioned kind that begins with a door-knob on the outside and runs the length of the house by a wire ending in the extreme back in a big bell. One day a collector pulled it so violently that he and the door-knob and a few rods of wire landed in a flower bed. A door-bell is not needed, for there is no lock, so we can walk right in.

For the interior of Mildew Manse you really need a compass and a guide book to steer you straight. It's more complicated than that Maze Mark once took us into at an Amusement Park. There are circular halls and all sorts of connecting corridors between the several additions. Some of these links form a cul-de-sac and if you are going fast, you bring up short against a wall. I was a little ashamed at the quality of my bump of locality until I heard a shouting one day and following it up came across a plumber. We were not more than ten feet

apart, yet we were separated by an open space inclosed by a circular railing.

"Excuse me, lady," he said shortly, "but I'd like to know how I am going to get out of this place!"

"Why–er–go down the stairs," I suggested, and my ruling passion being strong, I had hard work not to put out my hand for a quarter.

"Sure thing!" he replied grimly. "If I could find the stairs, you bet you I'd go down them. I think they must have taken them away when I come up here."

I reflected.

"Turn to your right," I directed, "and go down that dark passageway till you come to a small, unfurnished room. Walk through that room into the main hall, and there you'll find the stairs."

"Thanks, lady," he said as he turned to the right and vanished. He presently returned.

"You give me a bum steer," he said shortly. "I found the dark hall all right, all right, and one of them Katzenjammer kids had strung a rope across it. I made the empty room you spoke of, but nothing

doing. No stairs; just more rooms. We charge by the time, you know."

This reminder hastened me to action.

"I'll see if I can find some one," I exclaimed and hurried back whence I had come, echoes of his allusions to "hellish houses" and looking for "needles in haystacks" pursuing me in my flight. I located my room, went down stairs and sent a young Haphazard to the rescue.

During the winter months the family confine themselves to the original colonial part of the house, but as navigation opens (in the yard) and the season advances they extend their territory. The first day I was there I asked one of the little boys if his mother was in the library. "The library," he repeated vaguely. "Oh, you mean the room the books are in. That's California." I then learned that their rooms are all named geographically in accordance with temperature. Winnipeg is never entered in winter, but in summer is a favorite sitting-room. An east bedroom, abandoned in summer, is The Needles. My pleasantly tempered room is Oregon.

California is the shabbiest, cosiest, most

livable and lovable room you can picture. The carpet is raveled and faded, but of pleasing pattern. The upholstery is threadbare, but the chairs easy. The books in old, open cases are thumb-marked and worn — the titles tell you why. The couch is shabby but covered with comfortable spreads and real, not decorative, pillows on which you are expected to lay your head. The small, square piano is old and its frame dilapidated, but its tone is still sweet, like the voice of an old gentlewoman. There are reading lamps with green shades — the Gas Company shut off the meter last month. I have no apologies to make for the big fireplace with its briskly burning, backlog fire. All the wealth of Golconda could not improve it.

And I am one of the "sisters of the Golden Circle" who occupy this charming California, for I only sleep and dress and write letters in Oregon.

Now for the family: From Grandma Haphazard aged eighty to the twins of nine years, they have one thing in common — a loyal love of Mildew Manse.

Grandma Haphazard is the real thing in

grandmothers. She divides her time between her bed and a wheel-chair, but she is sweet-hearted and takes a lively interest in all the affairs of the day.

Mr. Wilkie Haphazard, head of the house — or should be, though I guess it has none — travels for a thread firm. His commissions are not large, but he says it is better to sell a necessity like thread which hard times cannot affect than to handle a more fluctuating and luxurious commodity. People must sew in all seasons. He is threadbare (no pun intended) himself in appearance. I cannot tell you much more about him, because he "went on the road" the second day after I came. I noticed that he has a pleasant low voice and a kindly manner.

Mrs. Haphazard I shall not attempt to describe. You must get your description from what she does and says. She is too good and unselfish to put in words.

Jo, the eldest of the "children," is three and twenty, but looks and seems older, yet in some ways he is only an overgrown boy. He is thin and dark and quiet, though his smile is always ready. He doesn't have to talk. You seem to know what he would say.

His eyes are steady, but the lashes twinkle. He is the only member of the happy-go-lucky family who has any sense of responsibility. It isn't really an inherent trait, but I think because he is conscientious and feels that it is his duty to be practical, he makes an effort in that direction. He can be very decided, I find. For instance, I had intended to put in some evenings at the Bureau and a part of my Sundays, but Jo said nay, that the tide must ebb in order to flow and that it was as wrong to keep at work perpetually as it was to live in continual idleness. He said very little but some way I felt worldly and ashamed of my commercial instinct. You know how determined opposition always makes me. Maybe you don't, either, because you have never opposed your spoiled darling; but Mark knows. There was something about Jo's nice, protective way of telling me I was wrong that quite won and weakened me. I heard a commanding bugle-call note in his voice like the one in Mark's, only not so war stirring. You can tell him so, if you like.

I told Mrs. Haphazard I was going to do as Jo said and she replied earnestly: "Of course you will. Everyone wants to do as

Jo says. I don't know why, but it is so."

I don't know why either, but it is so. Well, to sum up, Jo is a darling combination of boy, gentleman and man.

Next is Tippecanoe, commonly called Tip or Tippy. He is twenty-one in years, but one of the kind that Time will always touch with thistledown lightness. He is of a sweet disposition, quite irresponsible, and outhazards all the Haphazards in his utter unworldliness. He is in a chronic state of either getting or losing a position. He does either with equal facility. He has an alert air and a pleasing personality which raises false hopes in a new employer, for Tip's only interest in work lies in the landing of a job. Then his enthusiasm falls flat. When Jo mildly remonstrates, his mother defends his lack of stability, saying: "It's a good experience for him. He will be an all-round man instead of a specialist."

"All-round doesn't lead anywhere," replied Jo. "Tippy has never had two pay days in the same place yet."

It doesn't make any perceptible difference in the family exchequer whether Tip works

or not. He spends all he earns on clothes, and the family are very proud of their one presentable member, whom they call their figurehead. Jo is shabby, but with a neat, gentlemanly, well-brushed shabbiness.

After Tippecanoe, the family grew alliterative in their christenings. Hally is a pretty, soft-eyed girl of eighteen. She will be graduated from the High School in June, but is domestic in tendency and seems to have no idea of self-support.

Then comes a lapse accounted for by the "three in the churchyard lie." Grandma says they were "disappointments rather than, losses." Horace lived three days Hortense, three hours and Huldah, three minutes.

Haphiram, aged ten, is a shrewd, uncanny little fellow. He has the smiling face of a satyr with diabolically bright eyes and makes such unexpected answers to questions that I am learning to be wary in asking him any. I should sure be up a stump if he ever applied at the Bureau.

The twins, Hercules and Hector, known the city over as "Herk" and "Heck," are nine years old. They are regulation boys, "born

with their boots on," as Grandma Haphazard says, but at times Heck can be very sweet and affectionate.

There is One Other who is not as yet a Haphazard, but will be one some day if the course of true love runs smooth. "Princess Aline," they call her, and she is like your idea of a princess; fair, slender, stately of poise and with a shade of pensiveness in her large hazel eyes. She is the only child of the Irvings, fairly well-to-do people who have always lived next door neighbor to the Haphazards, but are their human antonyms in every respect. I can easily comprehend what a fairyland Mildew Manse must have seemed to the conventionally cared-for little Aline. She would doubtless have grown up into a prunes-and-prism sort of a girl if it had not been for the counteracting influence of the Haphazard mode of life. She is in and out the house quite intimately. They all adore her, but Jo loves her. He has not yet told her so, not in words anyway, but she knows. His reticence in this respect is where one of his bacon streaks, as Mrs. Munk calls them, comes in. He is no doubt waiting until he has more to

offer. He has been in a real estate office for three years and gets fifteen dollars a week.

When my first Sunday came and Jo so gently said I must not go to the Bureau, I went up to Oregon and shed a few tears. It seemed so good to be with people who cared what I did or didn't do. Not just paid people like the kind you left me with in Haytown.

I am up early mornings so as not to lose one moment of the delightful breakfast-table time. They linger over their meals which is their time and place for confidences and discussions. There are no secret conferences in the Haphazard household. Everything is said and done in the open, and all their pleasures are shared in unison. I have an all-time invitation for their Sunday night luncheons. There must be a Dutch strain in their ancestry, for they lean to a menu of "one dish but lots in it." We had an old-fashioned, blue tureen full of corn-meal mush and a big glass pitcher of milk last Sunday night. Comfort comes first at Mildew Manse. There are no cut and dried disagreeable rules. No in-

evitable Monday washday, and but one daily, grand round-up of dishwashing. No petty cares or jealousies or wrangles mar the even tenor of their ways. Neither is there a *meum* and *teum* method as to possessions. "Help yourself," is the family motto.

They are not a thrifty or a prosperous family, but a very easy-going, happy one, with no indebtedness to external conditions. They bring to the sordid cares and petty ills of life a touch of saving gayety, but the day of reckoning which they ignore must come, and I wish I might steer them away from it. If I could only inculcate in them a little thrift, a thought of preparedness, a bit of method and system! I offered them the free services of the Bureau, but they are disposed to look on my occupation as one akin to fortune-telling, or as a joke.

I wonder how Mark will regard my venture in business. He looked so pleased — and so did you, Father Lynn — when I was deposited in that little Haytown. I believe you were fellow-conspirators; you thought loneliness might turn to love. Well, I

forgive you both, for I am very busy and very happy, but looking forward to your return.

Goodnight, daddy dear,

Your own

JOAN

April 12th.

OH, DADDY DEAR!

SO many things have happened to the Haphazards and to Little Jumping Joan, too! I will begin with myself. Of all preposterous things! Tippecanoe proposed to me. Early in the week he asked me to go to a vaudeville theatre with him. This was the first time I had had occasion to dress for any place except the Bureau and California, so in deference to Tippy's devotion to dress, I made a toilette fitting the finest theatre in the city. The look of pleased approval as his Irish-blue eyes ran the gamut of my garments well paid me for my pains. He was shaved, shined, pressed and groomed to perfection.

"They make a fine-looking couple," said Grandma approvingly, as we left the house.

It was evident that Tippecanoe thought so, too. In fact, he was so permeated by the consciousness of our smartness that the silly stunts of the performers shone in the reflected roseate hue of his enthusiasm, which you mustn't think was due to self-vanity.

It was our combined harmony of fittings — a perfect team work in toilettes, a two-in-oneness that appealed to him. This feeling intensified during the hour and a half that we sat in the theatre and by the time we had reached the steps that led down into the Manse grounds, it culminated in a proposal.

In my surprise and confusion, I mistook Haphiram's latest contrivance in floating rafts for the stationary board walk, and in another instant I had drifted beyond Tippecanoe's prospective embrace. By the time I had secured the steering pole that was fortunately on board I was too far away to shout back that I could never be Mrs. Tippecanoe even if we were a fine-looking couple. As I whirled swiftly by the lilac bush I called to him that I would, perforce, keep on by the waterway to try to make a landing at the steps to Winnipeg, and directed him to go via overland route to the same place and help me ashore.

We met at the harbor of the "stoop" as grandma calls it, and as soon as I was in dry dock Tippy renewed his offer. It

was not until we had left Winnipeg that I could find words in which to refuse him coherently. He offered inducements, saying he would get a steady job, and that we could have all the rooms we wanted in Mildew Manse. This time I said no very negatively, and he grasped the fact that he was refused much more quickly and graciously than Mark did. He was very sweet and sorry about it instead of being offended.

I made a detour, bringing up at Oregon while he went on to California, for I knew that he would at once confide in the family. They are so loyal and so united that I felt as if in hurting one I had hurt them all. I sat in my barrel chair feeling like a criminal awaiting sentence and kept listening for the coming footsteps of the one deputized to tell me that I must leave this beautiful Mildew Manse, for under the circumstances, of course, it would be very uncomfortable for Tippecanoe and me to meet.

At last I heard footsteps and by the sound of little heel-clicks I knew that Hally was the messenger.

When I saw her, my fears fled. She looked quite as apologetic as I felt.

"You mustn't mind Tippy," she said quickly. "It was horrid in him to bother you that way. I never saw Jo so vexed. He is afraid you won't wish to stay here now, and we all want you to so much. Tippy promises that if you will only forget it, he'll never, never do it again."

"Oh, dear!" I said, smiling through my tears, "and here I have been worrying and expecting that you'd turn me out."

We both laughed, and then she said I was to come down and help eat the corn the boys had popped.

"Wait!" I cried, seizing a suggestion — I mean an inspiration — for the disillusioning of Tippy.

I exchanged my tailor-made for a faded house dress.

It worked. He looked foolish at first, but in a few moments was cheerfully salting corn and, I am sure, wondering how he ever came to think me the half necessary for the perfect whole.

Under cover of the noise made by the munching of many corn-eaters, Mrs. Hap-

hazard managed to whisper consolingly to me: "He'll get over it. He takes and gets over everything quickly."

This was comforting, if not flattering. I could not help feeling a little flustered. After all, a proposal is a proposal and, even when it comes from a Tippecanoe, is a great event in a girl's life. Aline, who, of course, was present, drew me aside into lower California, which is right over the furnace.

"I wish," she said sweetly, "that Tippy was older — and different. It would be nice for you and me to be sisters, I think."

I looked at her keenly, and something in her eyes told me that she had changed from a princess into a woman and a very sweet one, too.

"Oh!" I gasped, "he has told you!"

"Yes;" she said flushing happily. "Jo's salary was raised to-day — eighteen dollars a week. He is coming over to ask father in the morning."

I told her how glad I was — I don't know that I really was, but I made up my mind I'd try to be — and how sure I had been from the very first that they were lovers.

"Oh, yes," she replied artlessly, "I've always loved him ever since I can remember. 'Jo' was the first word I learned to speak."

"Will it be a long engagement?" I asked.

"It depends upon what father and mother think, I suppose," she said slowly with a little sigh. "I'd like to be married now and come here to live."

"You will live here?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Of course. I've always loved this old place. I've had all my best times here. No other place could seem more like home to me. There are plenty of rooms unoccupied, you know, and then Jo, too, could not bear to live anywhere else."

I smiled, thinking of Tippecanoe's offer.

If the family all feel that way when they marry, Mildew Manse will become a veritable House of Haphazards.

Jo came up, or rather, down, and took us back to the popcorn pan.

I could scarcely sleep that night. Some way what Tippy said made me think of Mark and his complaint to you that I had made light of a serious matter. I am be-

ginning to understand how he felt — just as I do about Tippy's unconcern. Then I thought of Jo and Aline, especially of Jo, and what a tender lover and devoted husband he will make. If it had been Jo who proposed to me instead of Tippy, my heart would have skipped a beat or two, I am sure. Maybe it was a good thing that I understood from the beginning that Jo was spoken for. But I don't want to marry anyone, daddy darling. I want to live with you in a little house that is really and truly ours. I'd so love to take root somewhere. I feel like a traveling library, and I'd much prefer to be shelved and labeled.

I arose quite late the next morning after my proposal and when I put my head out the casement window for a breath of the soft spring air, I saw the raft. Haphiram names all his watercraft, and evidently this last one on which I took my little trip had just been christened. Imagine my feelings when I read from the banner flapping in the breeze, "The Courtship."

I was late to breakfast. So was Tippy, but being jobless, it made no difference to him. Jo was just leaving the house with

a new little look of grim determination about his eyes and mouth — a sort of buckling on of armor look. I don't wonder. It must have been an ordeal to approach a regulation parent like Mr. Irving.

I overtook Haphiram lagging along to school and told him if he would go back and take that banner from the raft and destroy it, I'd buy him a canoe. It was wonderful what a little speedster he became.

"Hap," I called after him, "what will you name it?"

"Tippy. Tippy Canoe!" he sang back and we both went our ways. Mrs. Munk's third degree son had paid me a quarter the day before to put a sign, "For Sale. A Canoe, cheap," in the Bureau, so I telephoned him to deliver the canoe to Mildew Manse and call on me for his pay.

I was kept busy that day. There was a convention of grocers in the city and they made a run on the Bureau. Twenty of them came into the restaurant for luncheon. They were a jolly lot of men, evidently hailing from smaller towns, and with the air of having "come-to-town-for a Time." They seemed mostly to be married men.

They soon spied the Bureau and me.

"I want a suggestion, if you please," said one of them promptly. He had a round, rugged, tight-skinned face of dusky red that made me think of a winter apple.

"What do you want a suggestion about?" I asked.

"Any little suggestion," he replied. "I leave it to you."

"You are a stranger in the city, I judge," I remarked gravely.

"Spotted you for sure, Jeff!" chuckled one of the group.

"You will probably want to take in a good show to-night. Let me recommend the best one to you."

This was "just what he wanted," and I knew intuitively which one he would find the most entertaining.

Realizing that I had legitimate information up my sleeve, the other nineteen grocers clamored for suggestions as to presents for their wives, what shops to patronize and what sights to see. Some of them were facetious and asked all sorts of foolish questions, but I took them all seriously and made five dollars. Hooray! It will put a

plank in the house that Joan is going to build.

One young grocer asked me what kind of belts were stylish as he wanted to buy one for his girl. When I recommended a certain kind, he said: "Dear me! I don't know what size she wears. Could you let me take the measure of your waist?"

"It won't be necessary," I assured him. "Just take the measure of your arm."

This put them all in a still better humor, and they departed, telling the belt man he'd have to set them up for the crowd.

I can just see Mark's face when you read him this bit. For you always have read him parts of my letters, Daddy Lynn. He admitted it to me once. Mark has the usual masculine idea about a woman's place being in the home, but when she hasn't any home, what is she to do? She has to have something, you know, and I am really quite proud of my little Bureau and very much attached to it. I wouldn't have written you all about it if I hadn't known my letters were not to reach you until August and at a place too far away for you to return. If you had known when you were in Seattle

or even when you were at some of your first stopping-off places in Alaska, I fear one or both of you would have come back with designs upon the Bureau.

I left the restaurant very early that afternoon without waiting for dinner, I was so anxious to know how Jo's suit had prospered.

In front of a theatre I came upon Tippy gazing yearningly at a full length picture of an actor. I knew his longing was not for the fame or for the fortune of the actor, but for the evening clothes in which he was portrayed. Poor Tippy! If I could have a fairy wand waved over me for three wishes they would be as follows: A little house for you and me, the mortgage lifted from Mildew Manse and a full-dress suit for Tippy.

He joined me and we walked on together. I felt years older than he and I began to give him some good advice about looking for a position.

"I have one," he announced cheerfully. "I am going to sell gravestones on commission."

It seemed very characteristic of a Haphazard that he could find pleasure in the thought of so gruesome a pursuit.

"The Tippy Canoe has been launched," he told me, "and the yard was full of boys when I left. They were taking turns paddling about. Haphiram told me how you came to give it to him."

His eyes were dancing at the recollection. I see his mother was right about his getting over things quickly.

"The canoe's name fits all right," he continued. "She's tipped over most every trip. It's the first time Hap ever had anything that wasn't home-made, and he's as proud as a peacock."

"I must stop and get Herk and Heck something," I exclaimed. "It isn't fair to leave them out."

"They aren't left out," he said. "Hap will let them take the canoe as often as he does. They have all their things in common."

I stopped at a toy store, however, and bought three Indian suits and three bows and arrows. When we reached home the yard was afloat with boys and Hap seemed to be the only one who had escaped a ducking. I delivered my packages and we went on into the house.

I knew by the kind of cheerfulness pervading, like sun bursting through clouds, or smiles through tears, that Jo's altar-path was blockaded.

He had confided in his mother and asked her to tell us all except the three youngest members of the family, though I imagine Haphiram with his sure sixth sense has divined it. I had a glimpse of Jo as he went upstairs. He looked very much as you used to when stocks took an unexpected turn. His head was up, and an odd little smile was trying to deny the disappointment in his eyes. I do love a game loser—like you have always been.

Mr. Irving had been primed with objections. He asked Jo the first thing what he had to offer. Jo admitted that he was shy on worldly possessions, but casually mentioned a few incidentals like youth, health, good habits and an ardent love for Aline. Mr. Irving maintained that these essential requisites must be backed up by an income sufficient to maintain a family and household.

Jo then proudly stated that he had the munificent salary of eighteen dollars per week and that he expected it to increase. His

father-in-law elect insisted that "eighteen per" wouldn't run a house. Jo's reply to this rebuff was that Aline would live nowhere but at Mildew Manse. They could have their choice of rooms and furniture.

Mr. Irving allowed that a home and "eighteen per" would not be exactly poverty, but the many mortgages of Mildew Manse might any day take it from them and that Jo would have to help take care of the family instead of marrying. Jo argued that Tippecanoe was self-supporting; that Hally would soon be providing for herself (I wonder how!); that his father was good for at least ten years more on the road and by that time the little boys would be wage earners. This was some considerable look-ahead for a Haphazard, but did not convince Mr. Irving, who said that under the circumstances, he could not give his consent.

Jo was undaunted and asked under what circumstances he might hope to win his suit. Mr. Irving named two conditions: first, that Mildew Manse must be cleared entirely of mortgages; second, that Jo must be earning a salary of at least twenty-five dollars a week. These were two most ap-

palling obstacles. It would be at least five years before Jo could expect such a magnificent salary, and as for lifting the mortgage nothing short of a miracle could do that.

Jo had come home crushed by the mountain of mortgages on his shoulders, and with his moneymoon as far away as if he were looking through the wrong end of a spyglass, but Aline had come over to tell him she would wait a lifetime for him.

They made me stay to their night meal (I haven't discovered yet whether it is dinner or supper) and by the time we had gathered around the table, they were again almost normal in cheerfulness. As I went into South Dakota, the dining-room, I looked out the window and saw a small army of boys trooping home to suppers and scoldings, for they were all soaked and many of them bore arrow wounds. I had my doubts as to whether I had chosen wisely in making my gifts. I didn't care whether I had or not when Haphiram, Heck and Herk came in. They wore a look of shining happiness never seen in the countenances of the race whose costumes they were wearing.

"We are going to have a play tomorrow

afternoon," he said. "You can be Pocahontas."

By bedtime the family were positively radiant in their horoscope of hope. When Jo's employer returned from a business trip, he was to be informed of the situation, and it was more than probable that he would raise Jo's salary to twenty dollars, and most likely Mr. Irving would throw off a paltry five. As for the mortgage, something was quite likely to happen. Perhaps they could sell some of the land.

I couldn't share this optimism and I went to bed feeling very sorry for the young lovers and so interested in their fate that I had no more foolish raptures about Jo.

Marriage is certainly needles and pins and makes more trouble and heart-aches than anything else in the world. Me for a snug little nest with you, daddy. How sensible Elisabeth was to remain in her summer garden existence.

Tomorrow night I am to meet the very particular friend of the Haphazards. He has been out of town ever since I came here. His name is Barry Walters and he is two years older than Jo. He owns any amount

of property left him by his father, but he is not idle. He is one of the rising young manufacturers of the city. I am quite curious to see him, for his name is a household word. Mrs. Haphazard speaks of him very tenderly just as if he were her son. Grandma's face lights up whenever he is mentioned. As for Jo, he and this Barry are a second David and Jonathan. Hally has a far-away look when she speaks of him. Tippecanoe says he is a good dresser, and what higher praise could Tippy sing? To the young Haphazard hopefuls he is an oracle.

I am also anxious to meet him to learn if by chance he is a relative of that Phil Walters who was a college chum of Mark's — the one who went hunting with him last fall. Something always prevented Mark's bringing him to visit us, and when I went to the hop at college that time, this young Walters was away.

It is very late and I will say good-night. Your letter forwarded from the hamlet saying you were about to sail made me lonesome, but I must learn to be hopeful and cheerful like the Haphazards.

Your own JOAN.

April 14th.

FATHER–DEAR:

PHIL WALTERS is the Haphazards' Barry Walters. His whole name is Barry Phillips Walters, shortened at college to "Phil." He called last night, and in spite of the risk I ran of giving Tippecanoe a relapse, I made myself as presentable as my wardrobe permitted. When I came into California, Mr. Walters looked at me curiously and before we were introduced, he asked: "Aren't you Joan Lynn?" I told him I was. "Little Jumping Joan," he then said with a smile.

"Then you are Phil Walters!" I exclaimed, "and it was Mark who told you."

"You are a good guesser. We've come near meeting so many times that we ought to be warm friends."

"Do you know Mark Shelby?" chorused the Haphazards excitedly.

"Do you?" I asked in surprise.

"Only by name," explained Jo, "but we've

heard Barry speak of him so often we feel as if we knew him."

"You haven't ever spoken of him," reminded Haphiram, giving me one of his gimlet glances which are so disconcerting.

"You know," I defended myself. "I told you father had gone to Alaska with a friend. Mark Shelby is the friend."

I don't know whether it was the general surprise or the twinkle in Barry Walters' eyes, or a combination of both that made me blush most furiously.

"Oh-oh!" came in enlightened tones from Tippecanoe, "That is why you wouldn't marry me!"

"Nothing of the sort!" I exclaimed growing redder and angrier, as I saw the amusement at Tip's foolish confession flashing into Barry's eyes.

I hastened to explain.

"You see Mark Shelby and I were brought up together from the time he was ten and I was five — just like brother and sister — as Jo and Aline were."

"But," persisted that wretched Haphiram, "Jo and Aline have never been like brother and sister. They're lovers."

His remark fortunately diverted attention from me for a while for a laugh on Jo and Aline, and I had time to collect myself.

I had an instant liking for Barry Walters and I wasn't going to have our friendship start with any wrong impressions. He is a squarely-built, nice-looking chap with flashing, white teeth, fun-loving eyes and thick brown hair. He seems substantial and wholesome, a sort of big-brother man.

"Well," I supplemented, "like Tippy and Aline then."

"Tell us all about him," urged Aline, who loves narratives, "did you live next door to each other like Jo and I?"

"Nearer than that," I replied. "His parents died when he was ten years old, and father was appointed his guardian. We had no fixed home, so Mark went to a boarding-school and afterwards to college, but no matter where we might be located, when vacation time came he always joined us. He spent the last three years abroad. I fear he got the wandering habit from us. When father went to Alaska, Mark was quite keen to go with him."

"I had a letter from him from Seattle," said Barry looking at me significantly, and I felt sure that Mark had told him everything. They must be friends for sure. I believe men tell each other things just as girls do.

"But how did you come to locate here in this city?" asked Barry.

I told him about the Bureau, and it made me a little tired to see that he didn't regard my business with the respect its success demands. I am a little touchy about the way some people look at the Bureau, as if it were a joke. I immediately proceeded to give him the figures of profit to date. Statistics always appeal to a business man, and Barry instantly changed his views.

"It's a clever, ingenious idea," he admitted, "and I shall be glad to know the Christian names of the 'extras' when I drop in for a quick lunch at the Greek's. But I am rather curious to know what your father and Mark think of your business venture."

"I don't correspond with Mark," I informed him, "and father won't know about it until he reaches Nome some time in Au-

gust, so please don't mention it when you write."

"Mark hasn't given me an address as yet. But do you mean to tell me that you can't get a communication to your father before August? Suppose you should be ill?"

"He has given me the headquarters address of the Gold-Dredging Company. They have his itinerary and can wire or send a letter at any time, but I shall only send a message through them in case of an emergency."

Later in the evening there was a temporary dispersing of the Haphazards. Grandma and the three little boys said good-night. Mrs. Haphazard remembered some needed repairs to the children's clothes and went to the room where the sewing-machine chanced to be. Jo and Aline wandered down cellar in search of apples. Hally and Tippy, who sings in a light pleasing tenor, withdrew to the piano, in an alcove, so I was left alone with Barry in a remote part of Northern California.

"Mr Walters," I began.

"Why not call me Phil, since Mark does?" he asked quickly.

"I think," I replied pointedly, "I would rather call you Barry since the Haphazards do."

"I am so glad," he said, "for your sake and their sake and my sake, that you have come into this family. It is home to me and I love them — every one of them."

"Then why don't you help them to a different scheme of life and try to make them more prosperous?"

"But they don't want to be more prosperous," he replied whimsically. "They are happy as they are. Why give them ambitions and worldly desires and make them like every one else? It's their simplicity, their fresh viewpoint of life that gives them and this place the charm it has. Would you like Mildew Manse if it were modernized and furnished any differently?

"But you know perfectly well that unless they acquire more thrift and earn more money Mildew Manse will go to others. There is a crisis right now."

And as I knew he was entirely in their confidence I told him about Jo and Aline and the edict of Mr. Irving.

I loved the look of interest and concern that softened his merry eyes.

"Yes," he said. "Something should be done for Jo. He's worth more than the salary he's getting. I could, of course, give him a good office position, but Jo wouldn't be confined to a desk and four walls for a fortune. He's a good real estate man, and people have far more confidence in what he says than they have in the representations of old Rackney."

Old Rackney is Jo's employer.

"Then I should think he'd do well in a real estate office of his own."

"No; nothing doing," he said emphatically. "I know dear old Jo. Although he hasn't any personal ambition, yet he is so conscientious that he works faithfully in the interests of his employer; but if he were in business for himself, he'd be gazing up at the sky through tree tops instead of trying to sell lots."

"But maybe now that he has Aline as an incentive, he'll be more ambitious."

"That's true," he said thoughtfully. Then, looking at me intently, he said: "Such an incentive makes all the difference

in the world with men — most men. Take Mark: the woman who loves him will have it in her power to bring out the best in him."

"Then I wish he'd hurry up and find her," I told him, "for Mark has no aim in life beyond having a good time."

"Joan," he replied gravely, "you don't quite understand Mark —"

"Oh, yes I do, and don't think for a moment," I said, "that I am not fond of him. But after he left college and just went pleasuring along, I was disappointed in him. Why shouldn't he have a business, as you do, even if he has lots of money? He went hunting with you in the fall — off to Canada in the winter — back here the last of February — and —"

"And," he finished, "when he found he couldn't have the one great thing in life he wanted, he went to Alaska. He wrote me about it."

"That wasn't why he went to Alaska, though. He went because he had a 'hunch' that father wouldn't make the gold dredger a go, and he thought he ought to have some friend near when disappointment came. It

was the nicest thing I ever knew Mark to do, and I appreciate it. He is the soul of generosity, but he is selfish. He's been just like a son — no, a young brother — to father, and we three could have such good times if he hadn't gone and spoiled it all. He's grouchy because I wouldn't marry him and he refuses to go back to our comfortable brother and sister days."

"Mark never had a brotherly feeling for you. The first year we were in college he showed me your pictures and said that, from the day he first saw you, he thought of you as his sweetheart."

I was surprised at this.

"I can't imagine Mark's saying anything so sentimental as that," I exclaimed.

"And last fall," he continued, "Mark told me he had traveled these last three years waiting for you to grow up, and also because he hoped that after a return from so long an absence, you'd get rid of that brother and sister idea. He found, however, that you still clung to it, so in despair he went to Canada. Couldn't stand it there, came back to propose to you —"

I interrupted him.

"Wait!" I cried laughing. "I've heard Mark work himself to such flights once or twice before. The fact is, that all his life he has never been denied a desire. He has had everything he wanted, so he was confident I would say 'yes.' I didn't and he was peeved and went away angry with me. It was good for him to find out that there was at least one thing that could not be his for the asking."

"All's well that ends well," quoth Barry.

"This is ended — for me."

"Are you sure?" he asked a little breathlessly.

I read something in his eyes as they held mine; that if by chance he should come to care for me, loyalty to an absent friend would never let him reveal that fact.

I do wish Mark hadn't been quite so confiding. Not that I am in love with Barry Walters. I am not so susceptible as that. In traveling about with you so much, I've met a good many young men, and as they pass in mental review before me, I can select but three who at all attract me. Mark, Jo and this Barry Walters, and yet I am not in love with any one of them. Mark is

the typical elder brother; generous, bossy, grumbling when demands are made on him, yet in the end, yielding and ready to back you up or fight for you, if needed. Jo, the ideal lover; tender, loyal, unselfish, devoted. Barry, the comfortable husband; protective, practical, broad-minded, companionable; but if I ever have a husband, I want one who is the ideal brother, lover and husband combined. Don't want much, say you? Yes; I do. Maybe there isn't such a combination in the land of the living. Then I'll have none.

I am writing all this to you, daddy, dear, because I want to get it straightened out with myself. I hadn't thrashed the Mark matter thoroughly since he asked me to marry him and there wasn't time or opportunity to explain to you how I felt about him. I knew you were disappointed and I saw that it was what you had always hoped for, but you want your Little Jumping Joan to look before she leaps, don't you, and then besides, *I don't love Mark.*

At first I didn't mean to tell you why he went to Alaska with you, but by the time you read this, you will know whether the

dredger is a go or not, so it makes no difference.

But back to the main track where I switched off to give a dissertation on suitors.

"Yes," I said to Barry. "I know it is ended."

He looked half exultant and half sad. Then—the Haphazards came back. Mother, from the machine; Jo and Aline from the cellar where they found no apples, the boys having distributed them all to the Marine Corps that afternoon. Tippy ceased singing and asked Hally to play for us to dance.

Tippecanoe is a divine dancer, and there is a long hall with a smooth floor leading from California. Jo and Aline, Tippy and I danced while Mrs. Haphazard and Barry sat in the doorway and watched us. Finally Mrs. Haphazard pulled Tippy away from me and said it was Barry's turn.

Tippecanoe may be the poetry of motion and the most graceful partner I ever had, but Barry — well! I felt as if I had lost all sense of volition and was willing to go wheresoever he listeth. I had the sensation

of being up in an aeroplane without any fear of danger, only an everwhelming desire to go higher and higher. I can outdance the daughters of Shiloh, Barry says, so if the Bureau fails, here will be my field.

Jo dances in a dreamy, drifting way that is very pleasant, but belongs to the old-time waltz. I wonder how Mark would dance if he should ever consent to learn. I can see him now as he used to sit, scowling and sulking, against the wall at dancing school. Do you know it's odd, but one of the things I think I like best in Mark is that he wouldn't learn to dance.

I wish Barry were poor; then we could open a school of the dance and emulate the Castles. I had just reached this point when the music stopped. Why do music and pleasant things always stop suddenly at the very topnotch of enjoyment?

I looked up at Barry. I was thinking only of how perfectly we danced together, but he — well, I saw in the way he narrowed his eyes and set his shoulders that he wasn't going to forget that Mark cared for me. I am tempted to try to overcome that resolve.

At that moment I turned and saw Hally standing in the doorway watching us.

"I only wanted to rest my hands a minute," she said in defense.

"I'll rest my feet while you are resting your hands," I said. "I'll play for you and Barry to dance."

So I went to the piano and played until all but Tippy were too tired to dance any longer. If there were only a Victrola there would be just three couples and no one left out. But there won't be one. There are so many things wanted that the Haphazards say it's no use getting anything.

"Won't you sing?" Barry asked me. "Mark told me you had the true contralto voice."

"And you never told us," said Jo reproachfully.

I sang two or three songs and then, oh my dear! Mrs. Haphazard asked me if I knew "Backward, turn Backward, oh Time, in your flight."

"It's very old," she said apologetically.

I told her that it was your song — the one I always sang for you just before we said good-night.

I began it without the slightest warning of what was going to happen. I didn't get very far. I felt my voice shaking, tried to swallow a sob, and then down went my head on the music rack and I had the weeps — hard. And yet I didn't shed a tear when we parted, did I daddy?

Well, they all came to the piano, sorry and scared, I guess. The Haphazards never cry; not even the little boys.

Jo begged me to stop. Barry asked if I didn't want some water. Tippy told his mother to make some tea. Hally suggested camphor, but it was Aline, little Aline, who sat down on the bench beside me and put her arm about me and told them all commandingly to go way back — to lower California — and sit down.

"Don't stop," she whispered, for I was trying with all my might to brace up. "A cry is a good clearing house."

But I did stop. She was very sweet and sympathetic. I don't wonder Jo worships her.

When I was quite normal again, I was awfully ashamed of my breakdown. I hate making a sensation, and just when I wanted to make a good impression on Barry!

Down went my head on the music rack and I had the weeps—hard. *Page* 68.

"Aline," I said suddenly, "you can surely tell me — how is a girl to know when she is in love?"

"Oh!" she cried with a little gasp. "You can't mistake it, Joan. You'll know it the same way you know when you like music."

"When your backbone gets the tremolo?" I asked, interested.

"Exactly," she replied. "He may be a different man from anyone you thought you'd fancy. You may not agree with him on any subject, but if you have the little thrill when he speaks, or you feel there is nothing in the world you wouldn't do for him, and that the more you had to give up for him, the more you would love him — then he is the man."

"Is this the way you feel towards Jo? Then you must indeed love him."

"I love him so much," she said, her eyes dilating, "that if he lost his position, his home and everything, I'd be glad, because then I would be so much the more to him and try to make up for all he had lost."

I was relieved. I knew then I wasn't the least in love with anyone. I never had a thrill like that for Mark or Jo or Barry,

and I would never marry one of them if he should lose all he had. I'd love *you* all the harder, though, daddy, if you lost *your* all.

"Let's go to them," I said, rising.

Half-way to Lower California, we met Barry coming toward us. He stopped, and Aline slid by to rejoin her Jo.

"I am awfully ashamed that it happened," I said.

"And I," he replied emphatically, "am awfully glad 'it happened' and that I saw 'it.'"

"Why?" I asked in surprise.

I always supposed men detested weeping women. Mark does.

"Because," he said. "I was afraid you were always normal and practical and level-headed, and I like to know there are depths, even if I don't want to disturb them."

Well, Daddy Lynn, the song and the tears seemed to bring you nearer, if they did make me sad and lonely.

Good-night, and one hundred and one kisses from

YOUR JOAN.

April 19th.

DEAREST OF DADDIES:

THAT nice long letter you wrote while on the Gulf of Alaska came the next day after I cried for you, and I have read it more times than I could count. I felt like crying again when I received a check for the money I sent you by Mark. I so wanted you to have it. You may need it, and I don't. I know you wouldn't take a cent from Mark if you were penniless. I have put the money in our building and loan fund, so it is ready to send to you if you need it, or to build us a barracks.

You say that it made Mark mad; that if he had known what was in the package he would never have carried it. That made me mad until I read that you thought his anger assumed to hide other feelings. I know you are very sorry that things are as they are between Mark and me, and it's all the sweeter in you to say so little about it. I know Mark. He'll round to comfortably in time and we'll be back in our little en famille routine when you both return.

I wish he would not be so grouchy. I miss his letters.

The next day after I met Barry I came home earlier than usual from the Bureau to play my rôle of Pocahontas.

Spring rains have ceased and the sun and wind are getting in their drying work, so the pond will soon be a yard and the canoe out of business, prospects which make the little boys feel bad.

I dressed for my part by letting my hair hang in two braids, donned a very short, fantastic skirt, moccasins, a beaded jacket and a gorgeous improvisation of an Indian maid's feathered headgear, and went down to the water-front. I was unprepared for the large number of performers engaged for this impromptu drama and a little embarrassed at finding myself surrounded on the banks of the Chickahominy by a band of boys. They gave me an ovation befitting the costume of my star part and I soon ceased to feel like a fish out of water and became interested in staging the play. My memories of that part of our early history are a bit hazy, but I assured my prompters that dramatists never stuck to the truth

any more than historians did, so we improvised and improved, I think, upon the original. At last the parts were all given out, stage directions issued and the play was on.

Haphiram as Captain John Smith went down the Chickahominy in a canoe accompanied by one of his Indian guides familiarly known as "Chilblains." As they came shooting down the stream, they were attacked by the hostile Indians. Hap played his part most realistically, leaping from the canoe and wading (he wore rubber boots) to the marshlands, often referred to as the "onion bed." At last he was overpowered and led to a fire which refused to blaze. Then John Smith, or "Cap" as he was more frequently and intimately addressed, asked to be taken to the Chief Opechanaugh, strenuously portrayed by Herk. After some parley which carried me back to the days when I, too, spoke Hog Latin, the prisoner was bound to a tree by one of his garters which was conveniently hanging. He was about to be shot when Opechanaugh intervened, and they laid down their arms — bows and arrows and sling shots.

In Indian file they led the Captain the length of the onion bed to an old apple-tree. Here he was confined in a chicken coop while the Chief and his followers engaged in a war dance. Food, consisting of a pan of popcorn and a bottle of licorice-water, was passed in to Smith, who made such a vigorous and wholesale onslaught upon his rations that the hostile demonstration of resentment became very realistic and cries of "pig" and "cheat" rang out.

For three days (stage space of time) they continued their orgies and incantations accompanied by a tin-pan orchestra. Echoes of the hideous din still ring in my ears.

Finally to my relief the prisoner and his captives moved on to the seat of Powhatan, played by Heck. (The family, of course, had the principal parts as they furnished the settings and the costumes). His wigwam, constructed by putting a bedquilt over a clothes-line and pegging it down with clothes-pins, was on a rise of ground destined to give forth potatoes if they didn't come up something else.

A horrible yell went up on the arrival of Captain Smith. He was again feasted,

sparingly this time, the pan being held out long enough for only one grab and the licorice-water bottle jerked away with a suddenness that nearly choked the remonstrating "Cap."

After another consultation in Hog Latin, stones were piled up and Smith rudely thrown across them. As he was about to be slain, I Pocahontas, plead with Father Heck for his life, but to no avail. I made a hit by using the Indian words Mark had taught me when we used to play this absorbing game. Then at the risk of my life, I clasped the prisoner's head in my arms and bent my face to his. I quickly drew back; he was so very redolent of licorice-water.

Powhatan relented and consented to let Captain John live, on condition that he send him two guns, tobacco, and numerous other things. All hands then gained the stoop by means of the Isthmus of Lettuce Land. Here we were surprised by the sound of vigorous applause, and Barry Walters appeared in the doorway to Winnipeg.

Alas for the Judge and the maiden! Alas for my hope to make Barry forget Mark!

I was a fright and looked altogether too much like the real thing in Indians to charm a suitor. I had not expected an audience even of grown-up Haphazards, as all the family save Grandma, who was napping in her room, were away.

"It would make fine moving pictures," cried Barry, as I scudded past him. He came in pursuit, but, thank goodness, got lost in the shuffle and was stranded near the Needles.

I changed my costume and remained in Oregon until the hour for dinner (the night meal *is* dinner) to which I had been asked.

When I came down Barry was still there, the delivery of three quarts of ice cream announcing that he was a self-invited guest. I have learned that this is a common custom of his. Sometimes he sends a fowl or roast, pleading that he can't get one properly cooked at the hotel, or, maybe, some out of season luxury which he says tastes so much better at a home table. He does these things so easily and so delicately that the Haphazard pride is not wounded.

"As Pocahontas," he said to me, "you

looked very much like that picture taken when you were fourteen."

"Which one was that?" I asked.

"The one Mark has always carried in his watch."

Think of our gruff Mark doing anything like that! I wonder if he has taken it out of his watch now?

"I still don't know which one you mean," I told him. "I didn't know he had any picture of me in his watch."

"It's the one where you are wearing a big picture hat and are holding a kitten in your arms. You looked no older than that in Pocahontas attire when you were pleading with Heck — I mean Powhatan — and I'll venture to say you felt no older."

I entirely ignored these remarks.

"I inspected your Bureau today," he remarked, trying again to get a rise out of me. He succeeded.

"You did! I didn't see you."

"No; it was at the hurry-up lunch hour, and the place was crowded. You seemed quite busy yourself at the Bureau, and I took observations. I thought I owed it to Mark to see that everything was all right."

So you see, father, that with my gentle mastiff, Jo, and my watchdog, Barry, I am as well protected as if you and Mark were with me. I rather resented Barry's presumption in "seeing that everything was all right," and I asked him sarcastically if things met with his approval.

"Entirely," he said gravely. "I saw you had a cool, impersonal, business-like way with you that kept your customers at the conventional angle of trade. I know Goudolaris, too, and he is a nice, respectable fellow, so I am well satisfied."

I am writing you this, because I know you will feel better if my assurance is indorsed by a man and one who is a friend of Mark's.

Every time Barry looked at me during dinner and throughout the evening his eyes danced and his mouth twitched. I suppose he was thinking of my outlandish appearance as Pocahontas. However, as he was taking his departure he made amends by asking Hally and myself to go to the theatre and to supper afterwards the following Thursday night.

I wonder if he invited me to chaperon

Hally, or asked her to help him sustain his rôle of the faithful friend?

Hally was simply in the seventh heaven. All the Haphazards adore the theatre. As Mr. Irving is one of the owners of the principal opera-house, Aline always has two tickets at her disposal. This, of course, takes care of Jo. Tippecanoe ushers his way in. Barry often sends matinée tickets to Mrs. Haphazard and Hally. All the nickels the little boys can lay their hands on are invested in picture-show admissions.

"What will you wear, Hally?" asked Tippy suddenly, his ruling passion bringing the first little cloud to his sister's blue sky.

"I can fix up a white waist for her," said Mrs. Haphazard, "and that's all that will show."

"She will need a white dress for her graduation," said Jo thoughtfully. "She might as well have it now. You buy one for her, mother, and I will pay for it."

"No," refused Hally flatly, "I can get along without a new dress for graduating, because the class has voted to wear caps and gowns."

"No, Jo," agreed Mrs. Haphazard. "It

was the first time I had ever heard her speak so emphatically. "You gave me your entire salary this week, and you are not going to spend a cent on any of us again this month."

I had been working my suggestion faculty ever since Barry asked us, for I was determined Hally should have a new dress and some fixings without poor Jo putting up for it. She is much taller than I, so I couldn't lend her any of my gowns. I suddenly had an inspiration and I ran from the room after Tippecanoe who was going upstairs. I meant to take him by the collar, if necessary, and make him buy Hally some finery for the occasion.

"Tippy," I asked, "have you any money?"

"Sure!" he answered, putting his hand in his pocket. "I haven't spent my last week's salary yet. "How much do you want?"

"I want enough to buy material to make Hally a new dress."

He looked quite staggered by this demand.

"You've no idea," I cajoled, "how perfectly charming your little sister will look when she is furbished up a little, and it isn't fair, you know, for Jo to do it all, especially

now that he ought to be saving up to get married.

Tippecanoe's hand was coming out of his pocket now, and he handed me his last week's wages and his all.

It was sad, but then it would be good for him. You used to say something like that when you persuaded me to take bad medicine.

I hurried back to California.

"Hally," I cried triumphantly. "Tippy has given me the money to buy you a new gown."

"Oh!" gasped Hally incredulously. "Poor Tippy! He's been saving up to get a spring overcoat."

"Well," he can get it in the fall," I said. "I saw some lovely white sheer stuff today marked down. Mrs. Munk can cut and fit like a professional, and we will all pitch in and make it."

Hally's eyes were shining as we began to discuss the fashioning of the new gown.

"Make it long sleeves, Joan," she reminded me. "You know my gloves are short."

"No;" I replied. "You'll have short sleeves. Mark brought me two dozen pairs

of long white gloves and two dozen silk stockings when he came home last fall. So you see I can easily spare a pair of each."

"You shall wear my evening coat and slippers," offered Aline eagerly. "Jo and I are going to the matinée performance, so I won't need them."

For the next four days we sewed like mad. I took the sleeves and the girdle to the Bureau to make between suggestions.

Thursday we had an early dinner and right away afterwards I began to prepare Moses for the fair. Hally wears her hair, which is long and golden, in a looped-up braid and adorns it with a big perky bow in little-girl fashion. The things I did to that wealth of hair! Her head was perfectly regal when I had coiled the golden bands about it and secured them with the jeweled pins Mark gave me last Christmas.

"Now, look at yourself!" I commanded, and turned her around to the mirror.

"Oh, Joan! I don't know me!"

"You're never again," I declared emphatically, "to wear that eight-grade braid down your back. I'll do your hair for you

every day until you learn how to manage it yourself."

The poor child was so delighted she could hardly wait to get into her dress. When she was arrayed in all her glory I left her staring in the mirror quite overcome by her grandeur.

I was in the hall when Barry came.

"You look very sweet, Joan," he said approvingly.

Then, Hally appeared. From the tip of Aline's Cinderella slippers to the jeweled tops of my Christmas pins she was a dream —a vision in white. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes radiant.

We hadn't told Barry a word about our elaborate preparations, meaning to surprise him. We did.

"Why, Hally!"

He really couldn't stop staring. The family all came into the hall to see us off. Tippy looked more pleased than he would have looked if he were wearing the coveted coat.

"The finer the feathers, the finer the bird," he said. "I didn't suppose our little Hally was such a stunner."

"But, Hally, how did you come to grow up over night?" asked Barry.

"She's been grown up," I told him, "for some time, but none of you discovered it."

"She has put the kibosh on you, Tip," laughed Barry.

"It was Tippy," said Hally quickly, "who gave me this beautiful dress."

"Good for you, Tip," and Barry's hand came down in surprised approval on Tippy's shoulder.

"Joan suggested it to me," confessed Tippy, "and she made most of the dress."

"Aline loaned me her slippers and coat," added Hally gleefully.

It's simply impossible for the Haphazards to have any family secrets.

"And," she continued, "Joan gave me these long white gloves and my silk stockings."

"No; Mark Shelby gave you those," I said with a short laugh.

"Well, Tippy," said Barry, "I never can take care of two such good-looking girls. Meet us in the lobby after the play and go to supper with us."

Tippecanoe looked as pleased as Hally

and hurried on to the theatre, where we followed later in Barry's car. You should see the pride with which Tippy led us down to our seats and handed us our coupons and programs. I managed to have Hally sit next to Barry, and he was very nice and attentive to her. I think I enjoyed watching her naive air of childish pleasure more than I did the people on the stage, and I am sure Barry did.

When we were home I went into Hally's room to help her out of her dress.

"Oh, Joan!" she sighed. "Tomorrow I'll be back in the ashes again — a Cinderella. Barry won't want to look at me or talk to me the way he did tonight. It was my clothes."

"No, it wasn't," I said. "It was simply that you felt the moral support that comes with the knowledge of being well-dressed, and you lived up to the clothes. It takes the right kind of a frame, you know, to show off the picture."

She looked at me wistfully. "I want to ask you something. Do you — like Barry?"

"I should say I do," I replied heartily. "I think he's a peach."

"Oh," she said joyfully. If you — loved him, you wouldn't say it that way. I thought if you cared —"

She paused again, blushing. I looked at her keenly. This was no schoolgirl's first adoration, no hero-worship. She really cared. I knew that until tonight Barry had looked upon Hally about as he did upon the twins. He wasn't susceptible to clothes as Tippy is, but every man likes to see a girl trig and taut, and I had often observed him looking in dismay at Hally's run-down heels and knee-sprung skirt.

"Hally," I said gravely, "I don't care for him in the way you mean, I'm heart-whole and fancy free. But if you want to win him, you've got to turn over a new leaf. Will you?"

"Yes; I'll turn over any number of leaves if it will make him grand to me like he was tonight. What must I do?" she asked wistfully.

"You must look your best for one thing. It isn't altogether clothes. Even shabbiness can be ship-shape. You can fix your hair as it is now, and keep well groomed, and we must manage for a few more new things.

Wouldn't you like to earn some money? Enough to dress yourself?"

"Oh, yes! If I only could! I don't wonder Tippy spends all his money for clothes. I didn't know it felt so nice to be dressed up. Of course when I am graduated I plan to do something. Maybe I can learn typewriting."

"You mustn't wait until then," I said. "If you're going to do a thing, don't put it off a minute."

"What can I do?" she asked in helpless appeal.

"You wait," I told her, "until I get to the Bureau where I left my thinking cap. That's where my suggestions come to me. Now, good-night."

I went to bed, but not to sleep. First of all, I had to readjust my own program. I had thought to have at least a mildly pleasant little flirtation with Barry, but of course now I must cut that out. I can't hurt another Haphazard, for Tippecanoe does care in his little-boy way. Hally shall have her chance and I must work to keep her up to concert pitch. I found I couldn't wait until morning. I must do night work along

the suggestion line, so I lay awake until suddenly came a Bureau-born thought.

I put on negligee and slippers and sped down the hall to Hally's room. The light was still shining under her door, so I knocked and told her I was coming in. She was sitting before the mirror, and she blushed vividly when she saw me.

"I've been practising on my hair. See! I've learned how to do it."

So you see love can teach hairdressing.

"I just ran in to tell you that I've thought of a way for you to earn some money at once."

"Tell me, Joan!" she cried, dropping the comb and spilling half a pound of hair pins.

"No; not until I've worked out the details. Come to the Bureau tomorrow afternoon when you are out of school and we'll go shopping."

The next noon, instead of having my luncheon at the restaurant, I went to the tea and coffee store for my refreshments and suggested to the proprietor that he serve marmalade and toast with his tea.

"Marmalade! What is that, now, and where could I get some?"

"I know someone," I told him, "who can make marmalade to the queen's taste. You can serve it and sell it, for every woman who tastes it will want to buy some to take home."

"I'll try it," he replied promptly.

Hally came in after school and was surprised that anyone should want to buy marmalade. The Haphazard credit was good so we bought some patent pumps, a tailor-made suit, hat, material for blouses, some blue stuff for a house dress that made her eyes a heavenly blue, and a few accessories.

These purchases were all nails in my coffin, but I enjoyed driving them in. We went home and started on a job lot of marmalade. The next morning, Saturday, she went with me to the tea and coffee store. I stopped in again at night to learn the result and found he had sold out and wanted all she could make.

The family were quite excited and interested in this new source of revenue. I told them that the tea and coffee man wanted an original name for the marmalade.

"Mildew Marmalade," suggested Haphiram with his funny little giggle.

"Or Marmalade from an old Manse," offered grandma, and that was all I could get out of them, so I told the tea and coffee man he would have to do his own christening.

The spring planting is finished and the Haphazards have sown a yard-full of stuff. Roller-skating season is now at its height, but Hap, Herk and Heck can only look on wistfully. They manufactured a pair of skates, using big empty spools for rollers, and there are three very black and blue and bruised Haphazards as a result of home industry.

Tomorrow will be my birthday, and I feel sure I shall have something from you. It will be my first since I was six years old that Mark has let pass, as I feel sure that he will do. This is where I ring off, but look out for the next car.

YOUR OWN JOAN.

April 26th.

My Own Dear Father:

THE birthday letter and the beautiful, beautiful presents were forwarded here, but I'll begin with the morning of my anniversary. I had been very careful not to tell the Haphazards what an eventful day it was, for I didn't want them to give me anything, but it seems Hally found it out from the fly-leaf of one of my books, so when I came down to breakfast, there was a little pile of presents at my place. The Haphazards make a great deal of birthdays and holidays. There were six knitted washcloths from Grandma, some bedroom slippers from Mrs. Haphazard, a new song from Jo, a girdle from Tippy, a hand-stitched handkerchief from Hally, and the three little boys had put together and bought me a bottle of quadruple extract of tuberose perfume.

I was so surprised and overcome I couldn't speak, so I jumped up and beginning with Grandma kissed each and every Haphazard. When I came to Tippy, he drew back and

said: "Wait! I want my turn to come last, after Heck." Heck is ten minutes younger than Herk. This was somewhat embarrassing and made me feel conscious when I came back to embrace him, especially as he gave me one extra "to grow on."

When I reached the Bureau I found another surprise in a box of American Beauties from Barry. I haven't made much progress yet in heading him off and Hallyward. He pays tribute to her tailor-made style, her "done-up hair" and the dress of beautiful blue, and he treats her with the homage born of theatre night, but he continues to flutter about me, probably because he thinks I am forbidden fruit.

Barry, Aline and I were invited to dine at the house in honor of my birthday. When I came home Hap, Heck and Herk chorused: "We've got three surprises for you."

The "first surprise" was that their father had come home. He is a nice, quiet gentleman and yet not so meek as that description sounds. He was very sweet in his greeting of me.

"We've always wanted one more little

girl to come to us," he said smiling, "and now she has. So we have three."

"Three!" I repeated stupidly.

"Aline," he explained, looking at her something the way Jo does, and she instantly slipped into his outstretched arms.

The second surprise was a cake with twenty candles. My first birthday cake! And my first party, too, I told them.

Hally was so sweet about the roses Barry sent me, and not in the least envious. When he came to dinner, he brought her a lovely bunch of violets, the favorite flower of flowers for me. That was one thing I didn't scold Mark for being so lavish with.

I kept looking for the third surprise and finally after dinner asked for it.

"We couldn't let you have it before dinner," explained Mrs. Haphazard, "because we notice that you don't eat when you are excited."

She brought out two packages — one very large and one very small.

"They came by express this afternoon," she said.

"It's like Christmas," said the little Haphazards, jumping about while I hurried to

take the wrappings from your present. Oh, you duck of a daddy, where did you find that lovely, Japanese-imported kimono with the delicate, exquisite tints, and the slippers to match? The darling letter was the best of all.

I tried on the kimono at once and let them "oh" and "ah" until Heck called my attention to the little package. I opened it with misgivings. I was so glad Mark had not let my birthday pass without a remembrance of some kind, but I feared and expected to find one of those expensive pieces of jewelry he is so fond of giving to me.

Well, Daddy Lynn, when I opened the box and saw! Oh! I just danced up and down and cried and laughed and kissed it over and over, while the Haphazards grew nervous. You see they never had any downs so they can't have any ups. They always keep to that mid-channel of safe serenity that cheerful people travel. Me for the showers so you can have rainbows; the winter, so you can have summer.

"See here, little Jumping Joan," said Barry finally, "suppose you come down to earth long enough to show us what you have there."

"The loveliest thing in the world," I said, and I held up that darling picture of you in the beautiful little oval frame — what I have always begged you for, but never succeeded in dragging you to a studio. Mark must have manacled you.

"He looks just like a father," said Grandma when your picture was being passed around.

"That's just what he is," I said, and then I picked up Mark's card from the box. It read: "To Little Jumping Joan from Mark."

In my delight I kissed that too, and looked up to meet Barry's ardent gaze. In a flash I knew what to do — for Hally's sake. I handed him the card.

"If he were here this minute, I'd eat him alive," I said. "Wasn't it darling in him?"

"You do care for him," he said in a low, tense voice.

"More than I knew," I replied unflinchingly.

He was silent for a moment and then he told me seriously how very glad he was.

Now, daddy, don't let this give you any wrong impressions, or raise any false hopes. It was the gift, not the giver, that made me

so gushing and it atones for many of Mark's shortcomings. When I went up to Oregon that night, I put the picture before me and under the spell of your dear eyes which look right into mine, I wrote Mark a little note of thanks and sent it to him at Nome. Everything goes to Nome. I hope it will thaw the ice and bring my brother back again. Do you know, daddy, some way I didn't like Barry's calling me by the name you and Mark gave me so long ago. Because I've known him such a short time. Maybe (I try to be honest with myself) I resent the knowledge that he was so easily swayed to Hally. Still, I really want my nickname to be for you and Mark solely.

The next evening as I was coming home after my lonely restaurant dinner, Barry's car shot by. He was driving, and Hally, resplendent in Aline's motoring coat and hat, sat beside him. It was the first time he had taken her anywhere without a chaperone. A little farther down the street Jo and Aline passed, so absorbed that they did not see me. I went on home feeling very lonely and sure that no one loved me except my old daddy who is so far away.

Mildew Manse seemed to be empty, though I knew Grandma must be there somewhere. I sat down alone in California. It was very quiet. The placid ticking of the big clock sounded awfully loud. It pays no attention to time, as we understand it, but has a system all its own. Grandma likes to hear it strike, so it is regularly wound up. When it struck nine and twenty times, I got up and went outside. I sat down on the doorstep and felt that I wanted to do something desperate, something that would make Barry write to Mark or bring a sorry look to Jo's kind eyes. I understood then how some men — men with natures like mine — go on a "bat" when things go wrong.

Then along came my saviors.

"We've got a bat!" they cried. "Come on to the barnyard."

I did, and they made the astonishing discovery that I could throw a ball "just like a boy."

I wish Mark would come back and fall in love with Hally. They would make an ideal couple.

April 29th.

DADDY: When I got this far I was too sleepy to write any more, and the next night I was too sad to finish. Something tragic happened. Jo lost his position which everyone supposed to be as fixed as the evening star. It happened in this way: When Old Rackney came back Jo announced his engagement and asked if he might not expect a raise when he was married. Old Rackney hemmed and hawed and finally said he was sorry, but he had decided to make a change in the business. He had a smart young chap on the string who had some capital to put in the concern, and so he wouldn't need Jo any more. The old Mutt! Here Jo has slaved and built up the business, and this was what was handed him as a reward!

Jo was gritty and resigned on the spot which wasn't what Old Rackney expected or wanted. He was counting on Jo to break in his raw recruit, the piker with the pile of money. I hope he'll lose every cent he puts in and that Old Rackney will be put in jail, and then some.

Jo came home rather disconsolate, though

the rest of them did not let loose their cheer creed.

"You'll get another position, Jo," Tippy assured him. "It's easy enough."

Mrs. Haphazard said things always had to get worse to get better, and she had no doubt but what this would be the means of getting a higher salaried position with a chance to rise.

Hally said it was so fortunate it didn't happen before her father went out on the road, so he needn't know until Jo had gotten something else to do.

Aline lived up to her theory of what she was going to be to Jo in trouble, and Grandma said how nice it was that it happened at just this particular time, because now Jo could spade up the garden which would save hiring someone to do it.

The next day something else happened. Tippy lost the tombstone occupation. The family were so accustomed to Tippy's losing a position that the occurrence was never noticed, but this time it was worse than usual. The firm he was working for failed and couldn't pay Tippy a cent, and he had actually sold a broken shaft column and five

markers. For the first time in his career, he showed he could stand his ground. He demanded his pay.

"You can't get blood out of a stone," said the senior member doggedly. "There isn't a copper in the coffers. You might take what's coming to you in granite. There's one or two of those defective 'To the memory of' that weren't inventoried."

The man was joking, but Tippy instantly picked him up on it.

"All right!" he declared. "I'll take that square slab of a stone marked 'Little Willie'—the one the folks wouldn't take because it should have been spelled W-i-l-l-y, and then the dots to the i's were too large."

"Whaddy' want that for?" demanded the man.

"For pay," reiterated Tippy.

"Take it," said the debtor grimly. "I only wish we could liquidate all our indebtedness so easily."

So Tippecanoe had it sent up to the house.

"Whatever are you going to do with it?" I asked. "Start a graveyard somewhere?"

"The floor," he explained, "in front of the

fireplace in California is all rotted away, and I am going to have this nice stone laid in."

And here I had been thinking that Tippecanoe had no thought beyond clothes!

There was a man who did all-round tinkering jobs for the Haphazards, and he was summoned to "set the stone." He set it all right, but he got it wrong side up, or rather right side up, and it was rather depressing when we sat around the fire that night — one of those cold, rainy, November-April nights — to stare at "Little Willie" in the flickering twilight.

When I commented on the fact, Haphiram went out to the barn and brought in Peter Paul, one of the donated cats who haunted the pergola-barn, and stretched him out across the lettering, but Peter Paul was not to the hearthstone born and he fled in fright to his more familiar environment of back fences. Seeing him stretched out there in that brief instant, however, gave me an idea and I went upstairs and brought back a small leopard skin, relic of Mark's wild-game hunting days, and laid it protectingly over "Little Willie."

"The sparks will set fire to it," they exclaimed in protest.

"There are enough of us to put them out," I retorted.

When Barry came home he said he was very glad Jo had cut loose from old Rackney and he offered Tippecanoe a position in the office of his factory as assistant bookkeeper.

"Tippy can't keep books," I told Barry.

"I know it," he admitted. "I wouldn't have offered him the position only I was sure he would be tired of it in a week and quit. Tip's gone up in my estimation though since I heard of his taking Little Willie for reimbursement. I think your Italian hand, Joan, is remodeling this family."

"I suppose you mean the marmalade scheme. Maybe you don't approve of hard, cash ideas for Hally's little head?"

"No; I approve of women's earning money in domestic pursuits. It's the commercial atmosphere of offices that goes against the grain."

"How very sordid my little Bureau must seem!"

"That won't last long," he predicted. "You'll be having a home of your own before another year."

I didn't tell him I should never marry. I am boosting for Hally, but sometimes it's hard work.

Nothing seemed right with my world that afternoon, so I put an "out" sign on the Bureau and went for a walk to the place I love, a high bluff overlooking the river. I like to stand in the open space and look up at a faraway sky and down into the lonely river.

Whom should I meet there but Jo, standing, looking — just looking, as I had planned to do.

It was a little slipped-in-summer day and we sat down on a knoll and contemplated the beauties of nature together.

"It's the most beautiful place in town," I said. "Why don't people build here?"

"The property has been in litigation for some time and couldn't be sold. It belongs to Barry, or will, when the clouds roll off the title."

"Speaking of angels and clouds —" I said, as an automobile stopped.

In another moment Barry came up to us.

"Good!" he said to Jo. "I was planning to find you on my way from here. What are you two people plotting?"

"We met by the usual way," I told him, "and Jo was telling me the reason no one had built on this beautiful place."

"The reason is removed," he said. "I can read my title clear to the whole Walters Subdivision now. That is why I wanted to see you. I don't wish such a lovely residence district as this would make to be mutilated by factories and working men's homes. I want it platted and put on the market, improved, for homes for the best class of people."

"Why not go to the Bureau of Suggestions?" asked Jo with his sweet smile. "Joan will surely 'ken a wy.'"

"Yes," I replied promptly. "At what hour this afternoon may I expect you? It is three o'clock now and I am going back to the Bureau soon."

He didn't take me seriously of course.

"I'll drive you back in my car and you can hand me suggestions en route. But, Jo, I mean what I say."

"So do I," I replied quickly. "And I don't care to ride, thank you. I came for the walk. And I have something to tell Jo, so you ride away and call at five and I

will tell you a whole lot about lots. Then if you don't like my suggestions, I will give you back your money and you can see Jo. Good-bye."

He left reluctantly, and Jo and I sat in silence for a moment. Such a big idea had flashed into my head when Barry told us about the land, and the big idea was followed by a whole train of little supplementary ideas like sparks that radiate from a fire.

"Jo," I said, and something in my voice must have conveyed to him that it was an auspicious thought, for he sat up straight and looked expectant.

"Yes," he encouraged.

"Cross my palm with a silver quarter, please," I pleaded.

He laughed and handed me a quarter. I hope it wasn't his only one, but I had to have it, as you will see.

"Barry will come to me at five, and I shall tell him that this is one of the instances when I refer my clients to some one more qualified to issue information on the subject. I shall refer him to you."

"Then why," asked the bewildered Jo,

"didn't you tell him to talk to me about it when he was here?"

"Why, you see," I explained, "I get a quarter in this way from both you and Barry."

"No," he spoke decidedly, "that isn't your reason."

"Well, Jo, you haven't any suggestion aside from the usual method of real estate men in selling the lots, have you?"

"Why, no."

"I thought not. I have, and I wanted the time to put you wise, so when I send Barry to you, you'll be primed for him. That's why I took your quarter so you would be entitled to give the idea as your own."

It's a long idea, daddy, and I am going to save it for another letter. You'll not be left in suspense, you see, because you'll get the next letter at the same time as this. I kiss your picture.

Good-night,

JOAN

May 3rd.

FATHER-MINE:

YOU are a darling to write me such a nice long letter when you are so very busy. I am glad the experiments are working out satisfactorily and sorry for delay in engine.

Now to resume my real estate deal. I suggested to Jo that he should advise Barry to advertise extensively throughout the city and country that he would give a lot free to the person submitting the most convincing article on "The advantages of a home on the river bluff." The contestants would then come out here for their local color; as would the usual land-lookers and the follow-the-flock crowd, so there would be plenty of publicity.

"That's about the best scheme I ever heard of," praised Jo. "It's worth a good many quarters to Barry, and he will certainly give you a fat fee for the suggestion."

"Me!" I cried. "I am going to send him to you, and you are to hand out this line as your own."

"But it isn't," he objected. "It's yours."

"You bought and paid for it. That's why I collected the fee in advance, so you couldn't make that objection."

"No," he persisted. "You must tell Barry your plan."

"I won't tell! I don't care a rap whether he sells his old lots. I only thought of it for you."

"That was nice of you, Joan; but Barry will think as highly of my ability as a real-estate man as though the brilliant idea were mine."

Another scheme came to me. I am full of schemes. This one is for us; but of that later.

I handed Jo back his quarter.

"Take your gold. I do not want it," I sang.

From the "welcome home" look he gave it, I know it was his last quarter.

"Tell Barry to come up tonight, and I will add some details to your plan," he said as we parted.

At five o'clock Barry appeared at the Bureau. We found a table built for two and he ordered some light refreshments.

"Now for the suggestion," he said face-

tiously, laying down a quarter of a dollar which the waiter pounced upon, thanking Barry most obsequiously as he departed for the kitchen.

The blank expression on Barry's face sent me into peals of laughter.

"He certainly has his Greek nerve with him," he said indignantly.

"It's just as well," I said when I could speak. "My suggestion is too valuable, Jo says, to be handed out for a quarter."

I could see a look of interest come into his face at mention of Jo. How much one man's approval means to another!

"If Jo approves, go ahead with it," he said.

I told him my proposition, going more into detail than I had with Jo. He was instantly quite keen about it, and so enthusiastic he scarcely noticed the light refreshments the waiter brought. I do like enthusiastic men. Mark just lifts an eyebrow slightly and drawls out: "Really!" when I tell him some hair-raising thing.

"I should say it was worth more than a quarter," he finally exclaimed.

"All right! May I name my own price."

"Certainly."

The waiter now produced the check for our tea and Barry ordered another supply. He also handed him another quarter.

"That other wasn't yours," he said.

The man left with a bewildered but wealthy expression on his face.

"Well, let me see," I mused aloud, "there's the streets to be cut through, lots platted, water piped, walks built, shade trees set out, advertising signs put up, titles and deeds and so forth. All this will have to be looked after."

"Say, Joan! Were you ever in the real estate business?"

"No; but I heard two real estate men talking about the preliminaries to such a deal at this table about a week ago and I learned the dope. Make Jo your agent. Let him handle the whole business and give him a commission on lots sold."

"Joan, I take off my hat to you. It's just the job for Jo. I'll come up tonight and we will go over the whole thing with him."

He came up after dinner and the "three

bluffers," as Hally calls us, sat down at a table that was covered with plats and drawings which Jo had prepared for the occasion. He took the initiative with that air of knowing his business which always inspires confidence.

"First of all," he said, "you must get a name for your subdivision, one that will appeal to desirable purchasers."

"Give Joan a quarter," piped up Haphiram, "and she'll name it."

"She can name it, but I won't pay her a cent for the name," laughed Barry.

"On that condition I'll name it 'Riverside Bluff.' It's rather trite, but the general run of homeseekers don't care for originality."

"The name goes," declared Barry.

We then wrote out an advertisement which in descriptive powers discounted any railroad literature on the market. We decided to have three judges for the literary contest, and Barry chose a prominent newspaper man, the mayor, and the principal of the high school.

Then Jo and Barry turned to their map and began a line of talk about so many feet front and some silly stuff about the north-

east by southeast which was very unintelligible and uninteresting to the rest of us, so we withdrew to the Gulf after I had proposed to Barry that he locate Jo's office at Riverside.

"You can buy a portable office," I said, "and set it up on one of the lots."

"Some location," he approved.

Barry belongs to the "do it now" class, so by noon of the next day the office was established and equipped with furniture and supplies. Maybe Jo wasn't the proudest man in town! In the afternoon I went out there and found him and Barry in a heated discussion.

"It sounds almost as if you were quarreling," I said. "Let me be the arbitrator."

"It's Jo's salary," explained Barry. "I have offered him twenty-five dollars a week and commission on each lot he sells and he balks."

"Not enough, Jo?" I asked innocently.

"Enough!" he echoed. "It would be highway robbery. Twenty-five dollars is too much without the commission."

"I'll act as referee and adjuster. Give him twenty-five dollars a week, Barry, and

instead of commission present him with a deed to a lot."

"You bet I will," said Barry, "unless you prefer the price of the lot, Jo. You'll need cash soon for wedding bells, you know."

Jo blushed overwhelmingly.

"I'd rather have a lot here than anywhere. Aline and I love the river."

"There will be no taxes for a year," said Barry, "and by that time you can sell it for a good price or— "

"When do you open business?" I asked.

"Jo's salary starts to-day," said Barry.

"Good! I came out here on business." Now, daddy, sit up and take notice for this is where you come in. "I came to buy one of your lots. Show them to me, please."

They laughed, thinking it a joke. Then I told them of your promise and my longings, and what I was working and planning for. Finally they were convinced that I was in earnest.

"I'll give you a lot, Joan," declared Barry, "for your banner scheme. Then it will be a good advertisement to say that the 'Bureau Lady' was the first purchaser."

"I won't take it," I said promptly.

"You see it's to be father's home and paid for with the money he left me. That will be the first big payment, and the balance I can pay in monthly installments. Father wouldn't live on a lot that was given him. He's awfully independent."

"All the Lynn family are," said Barry. "I wonder how Mark will like it out here."

"Let's get down to business," I remarked hastily. "Come with me, and I'll show you where I want my 'sold sign' staked."

We walked along the bank until we came to a beautiful bend in the river where the view is something to dream of.

"These four lots along here are the choice ones," I told them, "and I'll take this one with the trees in the back."

"And I am going to reserve the one next to yours for myself," replied Barry, "and build here some time. How will you like me for a next-door neighbor?"

"Oh, you are going to be married?" I asked innocently.

"Maybe," he replied, his eyes twinkling; "anyway I can keep bachelor's quarters, if I can't win a wife."

"Then, Jo, you take the lot on the other

side of mine and we'll have a neighborhood that can't be beaten."

"I'd like to locate near you, but I am not going to take one of the most desirable lots. I'll choose one farther on."

"I'll buy," I said, "only on condition that you take the lot next to me."

"That's right, Joan. It takes you to manage him. I shall enjoy watching you try to do anything with Mark, though."

"I think the fourth one, the one next to Jo's, should be reserved for the prize lot," I advised, ignoring his Markism.

"Great!" replied Barry. "Then there will be four distinguished citizens in a row."

We all went back to the office and I wrote a check for a bonus. The next morning the red tape business was all attended to and, daddy, we own a yard! If I could have but the one, I'd prefer a yard to a house. I've spent all my spare time drawing plans for a house, and I am inclosing some of my efforts. No. 1 is the colonial we are going to build if the dredger dredges, and No. 2 is the story and a half cottage, English style, that we'll have if you make just a little money. No. 3 is the little bungalow to be

erected in case you lose all and we build from future profits of the Bureau and your venture. No. 4 is the portable four-room snuggery of a shack we'll live in while we are earning enough to put up No. 3.

This afternoon we all went out to inspect "Jo's Job," as Herk and Heck call it. Mrs. Munk came over to sit with Grandma while all the Haphazards, Aline and I (though we really are Haps) went out to Riverside Bluff. You can believe a thrill of pride went through me when I beheld the little sold sign on *our* lot. I expect I shall soon stake another sign, "Keep off the grass." Tippy rather took off the glamour by calling the signs "markers," for the vernacular of his tombstone days hangs around him still.

"I shouldn't think you'd want to live out here so far away from us," said Hap reproachfully, as we gazed at my "marker."

"But" I argued, "some of you will always be next door. Jo can put up a portable house or move his office there on his lot, and it can be a branch of Mildew Manse, and you can take turns living out here. Camp out in summer and skate in winter."

The little Haps sent up a yell of delight.

Aline said she'd come out there to read and sew. Tippy suggested having a dance pavilion on the lot.

"And this," I said significantly to Hally, "is Barry's lot where he is going to build."

She blushed beautifully. Love is certainly a developer. Barry isn't quite in love with her yet, but he is hovering near the little danger signal. And do you know, father dear, my evidences of a business ability seem to have chilled the little bud of romance he was inclined to cherish. I believe even if Mark should woo and wed some Alaskan, Barry would be too disillusioned to become my suitor. A man of his type turns to the domestic woman as a sunflower to the sun. Goodness knows I'd be domestic if I had the chance, but I should always be interested in the details of my husband's business same as I am in yours. How I hate the word "husband." It's so homely and meaningless. Wife, now sounds more interesting and poetical.

You see, daddy, if you should need more money for the dredger I can raise some on the lot. Maybe I'll get the mortgage habit, too.

With love,

JOAN.

May 10th.

My Dear Daddy Lynn:

EVERY letter from you is postmarked from a different town, and I can't find any of your stopping places on the map. Hope you are always making Homeward. You didn't mention Mark in your last. What does he do for amusement? I wonder if he will answer my note? I can't figure out how long it takes to get an answer from there.

We've all been busy this week, and you say to be busy is to be happy. Whenever I am inclined to be lonely now I go out to our lot and look up at the sky or down into the water or across the bank into a beautiful wilderness of green. Then I feel as if I owned all the space between the water and the sky. It amuses Barry because I go out to Riverside so often, and he tells me it isn't necessary to homestead out there to get a clear title.

Jo has surveyors, walk-makers and water-pipers at work. His correspondence about

the contest is most voluminous. We were very explicit in wording our advertisement so that all the conditions would be understood, but no one could foresee such ridiculous questions as come in by every mail. Here are a few of them, and I am ashamed to say most of them are from women: "Will the winner have to live always on the lot? Does the river overflow the bluff in the spring? Will the lots be sold to only writers? Can married women try?" These letters are mostly from the rural districts. Of course, the townspeople flock out to the office to ask their foolish questions but Jo is sweet and patient with them all. He says it's good publicity to have them come out for any reason. He has already sold three lots and I have been offered a good price for mine.

Tippecanoe has resigned his position; quite a novel experience for him, because hitherto he has always been fired. He said he wanted to feel the sensation of letting loose of a job. I was inclined to be impatient with him, but when I saw how pleased and relieved Barry was at the loss of an assistant bookkeeper, I felt differently about it. Yesterday Tippy

secured a two weeks' engagement at a moving picture house. The regular soloist went away on a vacation and hired Tippecanoe as a substitute. We all went to hear him last night. I had my misgivings about his light voice being adequate to fill a theatre, but it was a small building. He was not troubled with stage fright. His good looks, natty style of dress and his up-to-date selection of music made a decided hit and the Haphazards nearly clapped their hands off. We stayed through two performances. The remuneration is small but the hours appeal to Tippy.

"Has bookkeeping skinned by a mile," he said.

I have unearthed a plot. One corner of my little Bureau space I've screened off for a retreat where I can remove the shine from my nose and fuss up before going out on the street. On the other side of the screen is a small table, remote from the others and patronized extensively by sweethearts and men who have secrets up their sleeves.

The other morning I was in my little rest nook, prinking up for luncheon, when I

heard the voice of Aline's father on the other side of the screen saying:

"I just dropped in here for a quick lunch and then was going to your office, but now we've met here, I guess this will do as well as any place. I want to put you on to a gilt-edged deal."

I want to be in on "gilt-edged deals" myself, and as I have a hunch that Mr. Irving is out for mischief, I deferred my beauty making and sat down to listen.

"You know that land out on the river road that Jo is putting on the market for Barry Walters?" continued the conspirator.

"Yes," said a strange voice. "They've got a big thing there."

'Well, now, I want to tell you, Rackney—"

Rackney! Now I did know there was something doing. I'd find out what these two old frauds were up to.

"Of course," said Old Fraud No. 1, "I want Barry Walters to sell his lots, but I don't want him to drive the old residents away from my part of the town. I understand he is going to put up a fine place for himself, and naturally the young blood will be apt to follow his example. He is a leader

of his set, you know. I like Barry Walters, and I don't mean to hurt the sale of his lots, but he will be making just as much money selling to the working class. The land across the river from his sub-division is not built up."

"Yes; I've been wanting to get my fingers on that piece, but some out-of-town parties own it. It will boom as soon as people begin building on Walters' Subdivision and I'd like to get it before the jump in prices comes."

"I've found out who owns it, and I want you to write and get an option on it."

"You bet I will! It will cost a lot to put it in shape for marketing, though. All those woods to be cleared, the marshy places drained and that underbrush burned out."

I almost groaned audibly. Those beautiful woods, the marshy places and the "underbrush" burned out and wiped off my landscape!

"I know some parties who will buy the whole place as it stands and clear it themselves," said Mr. Irving.

"What do they want of it?"

"Site for a new factory that is coming here. You can buy and then later sell to

the factory people at your own figures. You see when the better class of people understand that a factory is to be so near they won't locate out there. Just as soon as you get your option on the place, I'll put a notice in the paper about the factory. It will be all right for Walters, too. The factory hands will want their little homes handy."

By this time my hat was on. I left the Bureau and beat it to Barry's office. He was just getting into his car, and I followed suit before he quite grasped who I was. I told him breathlessly all I had overheard.

"Some sweet, little, old father-in-law Jo has on the string! Never worry, Joan, we'll block their game, thanks to you. I know how to find out who owns that land, and I'll wire myself for an option."

"Good!" said I. "Just drop me at the Bureau and then get busy."

I saw Barry again that night and he said he had wired very fully, following it up by a letter, and he seemed to feel confident he would get first chance. Three or four days elapsed and he didn't hear. I was shivering for fear the Irving-Rackney combination

had beaten us, but one noon I was called to the telephone in the restaurant.

"Three rousing cheers!" cried Barry's exultant voice. "I just received a message from the owner. He was away from home which accounts for his delay in answering. I have an option on your scenery all right, so let old Irving do his worst."

I could have danced a jig for joy. As I turned away from the telephone I found myself facing Mr. Irving who was buying a cigar.

"You look as if you had heard some good news, Miss Lynn," he said cuttingly.

"I have," I replied. "Mr. Walters just telephoned me that he had secured an option on all the land across the river from his Subdivision, so nothing objectionable can be put up there."

As I went into the Bureau, he looked startled. He evidently had not known of my occupation. The papers that night had an article in a conspicuous place stating that Mr. Barry Walters had bought up all the land across the river from his new Subdivision.

Only two months more and you'll be at

Learning to walk on the wavering fence with a balancing pole.
Page 127.

Nome and then what a lot of letters you will have to read and answer. I am counting the days until then. Good-bye until my next letter.

Your loving

JOAN.

May 17th.

DADDY-DARLING:

IT is blossom time and the flower beds, the fruit trees, the bushes, and the gardens send forth a spicy sweetness. It is hard to exchange the fragrance of Mildew Manse for the Grecian and garlic odors of the Goudolaris kitchen.

In the later afternoon and on Sundays I go out to Riverside Bluff and pick wildflowers from "our lot." I send you one herein.

Spring is in its heydey. There's no denying it, and everyone seems to be in the bill and coo stage save Hap and myself. I don't know, father, but what I shall have a chance to make the May grade too, but I haven't come to that part yet. Jo and Aline are the lovingest lovers you ever saw. Barry and Hally are near-lovers. Tippecanoe, fickle one, is hovering about the girl who plays the piano at the vaudeville. I saw Herk with a pig-tailed girl at the sodawater fountain yesterday and Heck carries apple blossoms to a chubby little schoolmate. Oh, it's the "marry month of May" all right — a man

and a woman the world over. Haphiram looks on with a sardonic glance and scoffs at these springtime fancies.

There is a nice long stretch of time now between my half-past five dinner hour and dusk, and I am allowing myself a Saturday half holiday like other workers. Then, too, the Haphazards are not very strict Sabbath observers. All this lovely, idle time I pass in play, real childhood play — with the three young Haps and their "gang."

Mildew Manse is my first actual contact with a yard, and I simply have to make up for that cheated childhood. Play calls to me and I must get it out of my system.

I was initiated into the popular pursuits of the neighborhood by learning how to manage a raft. From that I passed to marbles in the mud. Tag, duck on a rock (grandest game ever devised), still pond, prisoner, Pom, pom, pull away, one-old-cat (kindergarten to baseball) all followed, and now I am learning to walk on the wavering fence with a balancing pole. This last named sport brought me an adventure, a promise of romance, as I intimated. Last night as I leaned, not out of window, but

on my balancing pole, which I used as a staff, it struck a stone and I struck the long deep grass in someone's back yard. The house belonging to the back yard faced on the street parallel with ours.

I lay very still, not because I was hurt but because I was surprised, and then, too, it was rather pleasant to lie in the soft, sweet-smelling grass and look up into the misty sky while I wondered how I was going to climb the wobbly fence from this side.

I heard a voice — not a Haphazard's, — say: "Are you hurt, little one?"

I jumped to my feet and looked into blue goggles! They were worn by a man who was tall and slender and straight. He had a very nice mouth, but I couldn't tell the color of his eyes on account of the blue glasses which gave him a sort of sad, pensive expression. Goggled eyes always have a fascination for me. They seem so mysterious, so unfathomable.

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly, "but my eyes are troubling me, and your short skirt —"

Ye Gods! To think how near I had come

to wearing just the bloomers to my old riding habit.

"And my pastime," I finished for him, "but you see I never had a chance to walk a fence until just lately, and I am making up for lost time."

"I believe," he said, and his mouth curved into an adorable smile, sweet like Jo's, only stronger, "you are still young enough for me to ask your age?"

"Twenty," I replied proudly.

"Indeed! You don't seem so aged."

"I don't always walk fences," I told him. "I am in business, and I have bought a lot and I have a bank account —"

"Such thrift as that," he declared, "doesn't seem to belong to the Hazard family. I wondered if you could possibly be Hally. I haven't seen her for three years."

"Oh, no! Hally is tall and golden-haired. I am Joan Lynn."

"And I am Roger Kane. Are you visiting the Hazards?"

"No; I live with them. And is this where you live?" I asked pointing to the house in the distance.

"I am only visiting the Coverleys. I was

on my way to renew my acquaintance with the Hazards. This fence used to be easy to climb, but— "

"It would take a Zouave to scale it from this side," I told him. "It has a Pisa-like lean. I don't see how I am going to get back. Maybe I could do a vaulting stunt. Hap could."

"Suppose we walk around the block and go in by the front entrance," he proposed.

"In my short skirt and this cap of Hap's!" I exclaimed.

"Then say we wait here in the pergola until it is darker."

A pergola, a twilight and an air full of the fragrance of May blossoms are not poor settings for getting acquainted with a fascinating stranger.

We sat down on a rustic bench and talked about the Haphazards. He looks at them from the same viewpoint as I do and adores Mildew Manse, so there was at once a bond between us.

Finally I told him I must return before Jo began to be troubled. I took off Hap's cap, thinking it would look better in my hand than on my head. My hair came

tumbling down and he held my hairpins and handed them to me as I wanted them. He said that he liked curly hair. I told him he wouldn't if he had to comb it and try to keep it pinned up.

We walked around to the front of Mildew Manse and surprised the Haphazards by our entrance. They were delighted to see Mr. Kane again, and Aline asked me how long I had known him.

"Not long," I answered evasively. Then, seeing Tip's disapproving survey of my fence-walking costume and the amused twinkle in Barry's gray eyes, I felt moved to continue: "You see I was walking the back fence and I fell over and landed at the feet of Mr. Kane. We had to sit in the pergola until it was dark enough to come home."

"'Oh, that we two were Maying,'" sang Haphiram. "You said you wouldn't get it, Joan."

"Get what?" asked Mr. Kane curiously.

"The May mania," replied Hap.

"What is that?" he asked, more puzzled than ever.

"Don't you know that folks — some

folks—" explained the *enfant terrible* "get spooney in May?"

It did me good to hear Mr. Kane's mellow laugh, so good-natured and mirthful. I love laughs. Jo only smiles. Barry shouts. Tip grins. Mark simply shakes like jelly, and you wouldn't know he was laughing except from the little quirk to the corners of his mouth, but this man has the real charming laugh,—the laugh—that is like music.

"I think," said Barry significantly, "I'd better write to Mark."

"Who is Mark?" asked Mr. Kane quickly. "I wondered if there wouldn't be a Mark. You didn't tell me."

"She never tells of him," said Hap.

"If Mark had seen you trying to walk that crazy fence," quoth Barry, "he wouldn't have waited till dark to walk you around the block. He'd have picked you up and put you over."

"Yes," I admitted. "And Jo would have gone and fetched two chairs and put one on each side of the fence so I could step over in ladylike manner. You would have kicked the fence down. Mark would have pitched

me over in his impetuous way and growled about my doing such fool stunts."

"Mark seems rather formidable," said Mr. Kane.

"His bark's worse than his bite," I told him, "but I think your way was the wisest and nicest, Mr. Kane."

We had a most delightful evening. He is a writer, not of fiction, but of articles, scientific stuff. He spends some of his vacations here.

Today being Saturday I had my half holiday allowance, and when Mr. Kane came over the Haphazards were scattered far and wide. On account of the trouble with his eyes, the oculist has forbidden his using them for a time, so I read aloud to him. I haven't read to anyone since you went to Alaska. I enjoyed it so much, and so did he, he said. Then we had a nice long talk. He is older in years and experience than Mark or Barry or any of the men I have been used to playing about with, and he has a reflective, tolerant way of regarding life that appeals to me. Though he is terribly well informed (so they tell me) he doesn't advertise it by talking learned stuff, but is inter-

ested in all the little frivolities. I bet he'd even play paper dolls if I suggested it.

Soon after dinner Mr. Kane had to leave to attend to some function the Coverleys were giving. Tippecanoe went to the theatre. I pleaded my letter to you so that the coast might be clear for the quartette of lovers.

I have sat up late to write you a long letter. As much as I have enjoyed Mr. Kane, I am glad he had to leave early so I could write to you. Here are one thousand and one kisses, dearest daddy, from,

YOUR JOAN.

May 18th.

FATHER-DEAR:

MY letter didn't reach the postman because I kept forgetting to buy stamps, so you'll get a postscript. Your pamphlets and postals of Alaskan scenery are so enticing I shall be glad to take the future pleasure trip out there that you promise me. Isn't it great the way the dredger behaves? It must be working out well if that skeptical Mark is enthusiastic. He has always shrugged his shoulders at your schemes.

Mr. Kane — I can't seem to call him Roger, although he says Joan very easily — is here two or three times a day and almost every evening. We went to a ball game together this afternoon. Sometimes when I come home early I slip over to the pergola (Jo has improvised a stile) and read to him.

Aline came over to Mildew Manse one afternoon when Jo was away for the day and asked Mrs. Haphazard to drive out to Riverside with her. She had several parcels with her. Two hours later she telephoned me to come out there. I never beheld a more

foolish, fussed-up, little office. White muslin curtains looped back with blue ribbons, rugs, two or three pictures on the wall, a fancy spread for the table and several knickknacks.

"You forgot the plants and a bird-cage," I reminded her.

"Isn't it lovely?" she asked delightedly. "I'll come and fix your Bureau up for you."

"No, thank you," I declined. "It is sweet in you to offer — but you see Mr. Goudolaris wouldn't like it."

"He wouldn't!" she exclaimed. "Why not?"

"Well, you see, being Greek, he likes things plain and undecorated, something like the architecture of his classic country, you know."

Daddy, this letter ends right here. By the way, Mr. Kane loves to sit just outside one of the French windows of California at twilight time and hear me sing. I've never attempted "Backward, Turn Backward," again, and won't until I sing it to you.

Again good-night. I hope that I dream of you.

YOUR OWN AND ONLY JOAN.

May 20th.

FATHER-DEAR:

NO one but Mrs. Munk and Goudolaris gives the Bureau its due. The Haphazards, as I wrote you, view it from their regular joke-angle of vision. They call me "The Junior Lady from Philadelphia," "Solomon's Successor," "A Second Portia," etc. The business doesn't exactly appeal to Barry. He squirms between his domestic instinct and his commercial theories. As for Roger Kane, well, he is too gallant to tell me he is shocked, but he is a Virginian. Enough said. Any reference to the Bureau brings to his mouth a wistful droop that he intends for a smile. He doubts very much your approval. So do I. He thinks that when you reach Nome I will receive closing-up orders, but it's a long ways to Nome, or from Nome. I shall be interested in Mark's comments. He will probably want to break the Bureau. No! Break is too mild an action for Mark. He will want to smash it. To the aforesaid, abovementioned backers of the Bureau, however,

anything that pays goes, and the Bureau certainly pays.

The Bureau, however, sinks into insignificance compared with what has happened since my last letter. In the first place, it rained torrents that finally settled into a steady downpour, lasting two days and as many nights. The morning it slackened I was late to breakfast and Jo was leaving the house, carrying a suitcase. Hap said he had gone away on business. That noon as I was on my way home to change my dress, I met Aline. When I asked her where she was going she evaded my question.

When I returned at night, Mrs. Irving was at Mildew Manse asking for Aline. None of the Haphazards had seen her since breakfast, but I explained that I had met her that noon. Mr. Irving then came in to find Jo's whereabouts, but no one knew where he had gone.

"I'll telephone Walters," he said. "He will know."

I knew he would not know where to locate Barry, for Goudolaris had telephoned him that afternoon that he was going to have some frogs cooked as he liked them.

So I slipped out to join him. I had a theory of my own about Aline. She has quite an imagination, and she has become very fond of the little office. She might have gone out to revel in air-castles, which are the nearest approach to a home she and Jo have been able to build. When she is absorbed in anything or in one of her make-believe moods, she has no idea of the flight of time.

I found Barry feasting on frogs. He was as certain as I was that we would find her at Riverside Bluff, and we motored out there. When the car stopped at the sign of "Joseph Hazard, Agent for Riverside Bluff Subdivision," Barry looked at me and I looked at Barry. There was no vestige of an office in sight.

"It was portable," I suggested, giggling hysterically. "Jo is so attached to his office he must have taken it with him. Took up his house and walked, or, maybe, Aline has stolen it!"

Barry was silent. He jumped from the car and ran toward the river. I followed.

"Look here, Joan," he said excitedly. "Jo told me yesterday that the river was rising rapidly and he thought maybe the

office had better be moved back. It was here this morning, though, on the very edge of the water. It's a pretty sure thing it has gone down stream."

"Well, then — Aline —"

My knees began to tremble at the conclusion.

"Barry," I continued," she is lost to everything when she reads or dreams! Do you suppose she sat here in the office and never noticed when it slipped away? We'd better telephone all the towns below."

"Nonsense, Joan," he replied. "No one could be as daffy as that, but we must find Jo. If Aline had planned any expedition she would have told him. I didn't pay any attention to the name of the place he was going, but after I take you home, I will hunt up a man that was talking to him about some new process for walks."

When we stopped at Mildew Manse, the Haphazards, Irvings and Roger Kane stood on the front steps in consultation. Mr. Irving had just received a telegram from Jo which read: "Aline safe. Meet her at interurban station at 8:40 tonight."

As it was now near that hour we all re-

paired to the station, where we made quite an imposing line-up.

Aline, smiling and serene, got off an inter-urban train but would not answer any questions until we were in California.

"I'd been shut in so long," she began her narrative, "that I was desperate, so when it cleared a little this morning, I went out to Jo's office. I had been there some time when I happened to look up from what I was doing, and you can imagine my surprise when I found that the office was shooting down stream. It almost took my breath away at first, but when I remembered that there were no falls below, I didn't mind so much, and made up my mind to enjoy my ride, so I brought a chair out on the porch and sat down comfortably, pretending it was my houseboat and that I was taking a little trip."

The three young boys gave a sigh of ecstasy and envy at the thought of such a ride.

"All kinds of wreckage floated past me, but I saw nothing I wanted until an oar came along. I managed to secure it, hoping I might be able to guide the office ashore when I came to a bend or a narrow part.

I went a great many miles seeing no one on the shore to call to for help. At last I saw I was nearing a town and I was sure I would be rescued. When I came to a sharp bend and I was driven nearly inshore, I tried to help with my oar, but I didn't know how to use it, and I went the wrong way. I had given up hope, when suddenly a man appeared on the bank nearest me. It was Jo. He had a pole and he pulled the houseboat—"

She paused. By the look in her eyes I saw she was living over again the happiness of their meeting. We kept still as long as our curiosity would allow, and then began a volley of questions, all of which she answered fully. She said Jo had walked down to look at the river and see if it were still rising as he was worrying about the office, and that was the first thing he saw when he came out of the grove to the bank. The pole? It just chanced to be lying on the ground — luck-sent. He would have swum out if he hadn't managed with the pole.

"Didn't you notice when you first went into the office that the river was right on a level with it?" asked Barry.

"No; I didn't look at the river until the moment I noticed the office was afloat."

"But, Aline," asked her mother, "what were you doing that you were so lost to the world?"

It was the question I had been wanting to ask.

"I will give you each one guess," she replied.

These were our guesses: Barry, reading; Tippecanoe, sewing; Hally, dreaming of Jo; Hap, drawing plans for another annex to Mildew Manse; Mrs. Irving, studying the cookbook; twins, playing solitaire; Joan, writing to Jo. She told us no one had guessed, though Hap and I were lukewarm.

I am glad, daddy, that our lot is above any possible water line. Whoever buys that one low lot had better build a Noah's ark for a home.

After the Irvings had gone home, Roger Kane and I went into Lower California, where there was a very dim light. We talked over the latest Haphazard happenings and then for the first time I saw his eyes. He took off his goggles for a moment. Such beautiful, soft eyes — like brown velvet! I love them. There is a little air of aloofness

and sadness about him that is very fascinating. He told me I reminded him sometimes of one who was very dear to him. I imagine he loved a girl and she died young, and he is faithful to her memory. You'd like him very much, father. How I long for you to meet all these people who are so near and dear to me.

I am glad Mark is developing business instincts, and looking into the dredger business. I liked your description of your little snuggery. Wasn't it grand you found such a place and did not have to stay at a hotel? You say if you were to be there permanently instead of being obliged to move on to wild parts, you'd send for me. Much as I long to see you, I couldn't come now because I think you'll hurry the work faster if I am at this end of the line. And I couldn't give up my Bureau which is earning a home for us. Anyway, since Mark has assumed the attitude of utter silence toward me, I think we'd not be comfortable together just now.

I must finish this letter so I can begin another to you.

Your very own,

JOAN

P. S. The other day I saw Heck's chubby-faced little sweetheart trying to jump the rope backward. She tripped about every third jump. My ruling passion of long ago revived. I took the rope from her and was having a blissful time alternating forward and backward skips when I chanced to glance toward the house. There was Jo snapshotting me! Later when he showed me the result, developed, I felt that it would be best appreciated by Mark, so in trifling return for the darling picture he sent me, I mailed it to him. I trust it may soften his sulkiness toward his little sister and bring her a message from — Nome.

J. L.

May 30th.

FATHER-DARLING:

DO you remember when Mark was a little boy he called this day the "Day of Decorations"? Every holiday except this one seems to change with the years. The Christmas tree hangings, lights, and toys are different; New Year celebrations have grown more festive and cabaretish; Fourth of July fireworks are more brilliant and wonderful. But today the parade is an exact counterpart of the first one I ever saw. The same carryall of white-frocked, blue-sashed children, the same fife and drum, the same Grand Army veterans — or remnant of them. The bands play the same tunes from the jerky strains of the Star Spangled Banner down the line to Columbia, Gem of the Ocean, and on to the inspiring Hot Time of the Spanish-American war soldiers.

It has always seemed a depressing holiday to me and I was telling Roger Kane so as we stood under the old flag that floated from the front of Mildew Manse.

He made no reply and I began to wonder

at his silence, he is so responsive and sympathetic. I turned and looked up at him. His hat was off in deference to the day and the parade. Just then he removed his goggles and I saw him wipe away a tear. Do you know, I liked it in him and I liked it that he didn't seem in the least ashamed of his emotion. And he is a Southerner, too. I think they have more sentiment than we Northerners.

As we went into the house together, he put his arm about me and said gently: "Poor, little girl, this has been a hard week for you!"

It has, daddy; that is why there has been a longer lapse than usual between my letters.

The very next day after I wrote you, Heck, the younger and more delicate of the twins, had a match with Tyke Donnelly to see who could sit the longest on a big cake of ice. Herk was referee and timekeeper, and the contest came off in the Donnelly's woodshed, witnessed by a favored few of the Fourth Grade Athletic Club, admission one cent, proceeds to pay for the ice. Tyke won by fifteen and one-half seconds and

received the cross of the club awarded only to victors.

The victory was a surprise to all. Heck was not susceptible to cold and was possessed of a great amount of pluck. I think it was defeat and disappointment as well as the exposure that brought on a fever that night. He was out of his head and raved and mourned about the cross. Herk hovered about the sick-room, and I expected he'd be ill from sheer sympathy.

On the seventh night the doctor looked for a crisis. Mrs. Haphazard, Hally, and Jo were worn out, but each one begged to stay with Heck that night. The doctor wouldn't have one of them. "You are all too worn out and unstrung," he said. "I want a level-headed —"

His eyes fell on me.

"You'll do," he said, and he took me up to Heck's room and gave me directions for the night. It was a fairly good-sized room with east and west casement windows through which a soft, fragrant breeze swept. The only furnishings were the little white bed, a chair and a table. The floor was bare, no curtains at the window — the kind

of a room to meet with professional approval.

The doctor said he looked for no change for a few hours and he would snatch a little sleep while he could, as he meant to spend the night there. He gave me explicit directions for emergencies and told me to call him if Heck rallied from the torpor that had succeeded his ravings. I sat there for about three hours. The house was deathly still. I was not sleepy; my mind was alert. I lived over my whole life from the time Mark came to us. As I looked back it occurred to me that he must have been very fond of me in those days to put up with my bullyings and bickerings as he did, for he had a good hot temper himself. He told me once he loved to have me abusive because I was so sweet and sorry afterward. When I had re-lived those days and come up to the present, it seemed incredible that in two months time these people could come to mean so much to me. Then I grew cold, thinking of what might happen this very night, and I grew afraid — awfully sick-afraid. Suppose the change came quickly before I could summon anyone in this im-

mense house? Suppose Heck died, and I had to tell them? Yes, I was afraid. Afraid of the stillness, of Death — whom I had never met. If anyone, even Herk, had stayed with me! I longed for Jo's sweet, sustaining strength, for Barry's cool effectiveness, but most of all for Roger Kane's absolute sureness. I turned coward and pretended to see an approaching change as an excuse to call the doctor. And then — the change came. There was a stirring in the little white bed. A small form tried to sit up and fell back. Two big eyes stared into mine.

"Joan," a feeble little voice wailed, "he won — Tyke won — the cross."

I forgot all the doctor's directions. I just felt that he must know, before he died.

I went to the bed, put my arms about him and raised him up.

"Heck," I said, "you *did* win. Tyke Donnelly cheated. He stuffed a book open at 'The Boy stood on the Burning Deck,' in the seat of his trousers. He confessed when he heard you were sick. They took the cross away from him and sent it to you. Here it is."

I took it from the drawer of the table where it had been put in readiness for him, and laid it in his hand.

His head sank on my shoulder. His eyes looked into mine with the contented look of one who wants no more. A feeble smile, a clutch of the cross and he fell back into a deep, quiet sleep.

The doctor miraculously appeared. I didn't move, but I felt his hope. In another moment pillows were propped against my back. A light coverlet was placed around Heck and another around my shoulders.

I didn't stir from then on. I knew what Heck's sleep would mean toward recovery. At dawn I looked over my shoulder out the eastern window. I saw the rising sun. I looked straight ahead through the western window and saw a dying moon. The best omen in the world, you know, to see the two at the same time. I knew then Heck would recover.

It was eight o'clock in the morning before he awoke. He looked at me, felt the cross, remembered and — smiled. The doctor sent me away. I met Mrs. Haphazard.

I shall never forget the look in her eyes when I told her Heck was going to get well. How Mark and I used to long for a mother! Neither of us could remember one.

Heck's road to recovery has been swift. Yesterday the doctor let Jo carry him down to California to spend the day on the sofa.

He was a little petulant — a splendid sign — in the afternoon, and Hally, who adores the twins, was the only one who could soothe him. She took him in her arms and was singing softly to him when Barry came in unseen by her. She had on a summer dress with short sleeves, and Heck's fair head was pressed against one of her soft white arms. The tender mother-look was in her eyes. Altogether she looked divine. I heard a little gasp from Barry, and then he went quickly to her. I slipped from the room. I knew what would happen. It did. He asked her then and there to be his wife. Heck repeated the proposal accurately to us all. They are to be engaged for a year. Then Hally will be nineteen and will have made enough marmalade to buy a trousseau. They will go abroad for a

brief honeymoon and afterwards live on the Bluff next to our lot. Surely by that time we'll be living there too, Daddy?

Wilkie Haphazard came home for a day when he heard about Heck. He couldn't quite grasp the state of affairs when Barry asked him for Hally, as he still thinks of her as his little girl and doesn't want to give her to anyone. That was what you said, daddy, but you added that it had to be some day, and that was why you wanted to give me to Mark, because you would not feel quite so parted from me as you would if I married a stranger. You'd adore Roger, father. He has been so dear to me through Heck's sickness.

The day after the crisis I passed in most needed slumber, so the poor little Bureau was left alone with the Greeks. Yesterday I went down again and trade was brisk. Goudolaris with Grecian simplicity informed me that he had a son and insisted on my going to his house to see the Graeco-Hibernian product. He is a funny-looking baby with hair as red as his face, a straight little Grecian nose and dark, long-lashed eyes. His name is, — honest truth, daddy, his

name is, — *Bureau!* Mrs. Goudolaris quite insisted on Mike. Goudolaris stood out for Christakis. The priest was called in counsel and tactfully proposed neutrality in name, but after protracted maneuvers and skirmishes they could not fix on a preferred nationality so the priest again came to the rescue and suggested a coined name — a name that was not a name. Goudolaris recalled the Bureau and its prosperity. I suggested (without charge) that they spell it Buro. I told the mother confidentially I thought that spelling gave it an Irish flavor, and I told the Greek head of the house that it was more like any country than Ireland. This is the first time I have ever had anyone named after me. I shall give my namesake a silver cup.

I am going to begin embroidering for Hally. She told me last night that she owed Barry's love to me, but she doesn't. I only gave her a little shove in the right direction, that was all. I see one thing plainly. Even if neither had cared for the other, I couldn't have loved Barry — not in a thousand years. So all's well that ends well.

Here I've written about every one but Tippy. Of course he has a new job. He is collecting for a firm. Imagine a Haphazard urging anyone to "settle!" If Tip ever lands a job where I think he has the slightest show of sticking, I shall put weights on him. He seems to be living on starts, and his life is a series of starts and stops.

In a little more than six weeks, you'll be in Nome and reading all these letters. I give you fair warning now that if Mark influences you to the point of ordering me back to that solitary confinement place where you left me, I'll rebel even if I have to regain my independence by marrying Tippecanoe. I have a fetching gown of peachbloom with pink-plumed hat to match, and he'll sure propose if I wear them. I can make enough from the Bureau to pay our board at Mildew Manse and I'll sell your lot besides. So watch your step. But you won't do anything like that, daddy. Not after you read all my letters, I am sure, Mark or no Mark. For you love your little daughter, even if she doesn't always act as she'd orter.

It must be the last day of May by this time, and I'll kiss you good-night in your little round frame and forgive Mark a lot of things for sending you to me.

I have a picture of Mark, too, on my table. The one where he is twelve, and all arms and legs. I showed it to Roger one day and he said: "He's a homely little tyke." I rushed to Mark's defense with that grand one taken in Paris. I think he was impressed, though it's hard to tell what expressions pass behind those impenetrable blue goggles. When I showed him the only typical picture Mark ever had taken — that one in hunting clothes, he said: "This must be the real Mark." Then he added very gently — he always addresses me in the tone one would use to a very young child — "May I give you a picture of myself and may I have one of you? Because in another week I shall be going away, and I don't want you to forget me."

I told him his picture wouldn't be necessary to keep him in mind. I dread to think how much I shall miss him, but I shall have his letters, for I have promised to write to him and he is coming back in

August. Everything seems to be coming in August.

Here is my last good-night, and do you still love me a lot? And will you promise never to leave me again?

JOAN

P. S. Maybe Mark would rather I kept a recent photograph of him on exhibition, but if he only knew it, I truly loved him in those days. Up to date I am heart whole, but if ever I come under the shadow of Cupid's wings, I shall still maintain that there is no affection quite so pure, so strong and so tender as that of a little girl for her chosen companion in play days.

I once worked myself up to a tearful state over Mark's kinless condition and I told him I wished he were truly my brother. He muttered somberly that he didn't; he had never wanted a sister; was glad he didn't have one; that if I had been a sissy and not known enough to play boys' games, he should never have had anything to do with me.

J. L.

June 6th.

FATHER–DEAR:

THE prize lot has been awarded. And who do you suppose won it? You would never, never guess. Aline Irving! That was what she was doing the day the office slipped down stream with her on board. She didn't mean that Jo or any of us should know she was a contestant. After all it wasn't surprising that she won. She loves the river and she put her whole heart into picturing the charms of a river-home. Then, too, she must have had a tremendous inspiration or she would have seen that she was afloat.

"You must have written some hot stuff, Aline," commented Haphiram admiringly, "seeing it took the house off its feet."

"You can sell it for a good profit, Aline," I suggested, "and use the money to help build a little cottage on Jo's lot."

"I like a big yard, Joan, and so we will build a cottage on the dividing line between the two lots where we can all go and camp out; for, of course it will be only a summer

cottage. I wouldn't live anywhere else but in Mildew Manse."

Oh, dear! Why won't some of them face the issue of the numbered days of Mildew Manse?

Poor Tippecanoe is out of the collecting business. He didn't rake in a cent from the debtors. I feel quite certain that he never asked one of them to settle, but he had a lovely time visiting with them and receiving presents of cigars which he brought home to Jo. He believed implicitly all their little, lame excuses for the non-payment of their debts and even tried to argue in their favor with the firm for which he was collecting. In fact, I don't know but it would have been a clever idea for the creditors to form a union and engage Tippy as agent to show why they could not or should not settle their accounts. He has several things in view. He glibly enumerated them to me and I told him that he had too many irons in the fire, and I was afraid he would put it out.

Yesterday afternoon I read Roger Kane the letter I had just received from you. He said something very nice to me after I fin-

ished, and I am repeating it because it was about you, too. He said: "That letter explains you. With such a father — a father who takes time to write you such letters —you couldn't be otherwise than what you are."

Oh, Daddy, Daddy Lynn, you always *have* taken time to write me letters and to do everything for me. Haven't we had the dearest times together? And the times that are yet to come will be still dearer. Do you know what I once overheard you say years ago when some old fusser was advising you to marry? You said: "Joan is the dearest little housewife in the world, and she is never going to have a stepmother." How I loved you for that!

I have something wonderful to tell you. One evening Barry came up when we were all sitting out on the west veranda.

"Some one," he began earnestly, "and I am not at liberty to tell who, has asked to be allowed to contribute in a slight way to your pleasures. He is a man without relatives and he says it will be a great kindness to him if you will let him follow his fancy in remembering you."

"What is it he wants to do?" asked Jo abruptly. More than any Haphazard Jo shrinks from donations.

"He merely wants to send trifles over for the general enjoyment. He is especially fond of boys and interested in their sports. The first thing he wants to send is a tent."

I was somewhat disappointed in hearing this gift mentioned. I had indulged in a moment's wild hope that some millionaire lover of Mildew Manse was planning to buy the place and hand it to the Haphazards on a gold platter. I knew at once who the philanthropist was. Roger Kane! The description fitted him precisely. He loves the three young Haps, and it was only the other day he was quizzing them about the different kind of tents.

"Why," demanded Jo, "can't he come out in the open and give the youngsters a tent without this mystery?"

"Because he is rather peculiar in his way of doing things. He is modest, too, and dislikes being thanked."

"You know, Barry," objected Jo, "it makes a difference from whom you accept things."

"I know it does. He foresaw this objection and told me I might select you as confidant on condition that it was kept secret between you and me."

"Oh, Jo, don't object!" cried the little boys standing in pleading line-up before him.

"I don't want to put a feather in the path of your good times, boys," he said earnestly, "and I'll manage somehow to buy you a tent."

Barry pulled Jo away out of hearing. I felt sure that when Jo learned the name of the would-be gift-giver, he would be satisfied, for he admires Roger Kane immensely.

One look at Jo's face was sufficient to show that all his doubts were removed.

"It's all right, kiddies. He may give you the tent."

In the wild whoopee that went up from the trio, Jo's eyes sought mine whimsically. I read his thought that Roger Kane was doing this as much for me as for the boys.

"I don't have to guess who the donor is, I said in an aside to Barry. "I know."

"I thought you would," he said in significant tone, and as if he were not altogether

pleased, "but remember I am not indorsing your surmise, and one of the conditions is that nothing is to be said to him."

When Barry and Jo went inside to discuss Subdivision matters, we all speculated on our unknown fairy godfather. All except Aline were positive it was Roger Kane. Aline thought he was an elderly man who lived a hermit life in a house cloistered by a wall and hedge that shut it completely in from the street. She had often, she said, noticed him, in his daily walks which he took just before twilight time, stop and watch the little boys at play. Once on her way through the grounds to Mildew Manse she had seen him outside the window of California looking wistfully within and listening to Tippecanoe's ballads.

Herk and Heck said whoever the giver might be, he was a good old scout, and they didn't care a hurrah what his name might be.

The next morning I loitered after breakfast and was rewarded by seeing a delivery truck stop in front of the house. The boys shouted:

"She's come already! It's the Linden Tent Company's Truck."

It seemed to me there was enough canvas and paraphernalia for a circus. When I came home at noon, the yard looked like an encampment. There was a very large tent with a fly in front and a smaller tent in the rear, and from a pole a beautiful flag flew.

I stood speechless, quite overcome by the magnitude of our martial glory.

"Come inside, Joan," chorused the trio.

I followed their lead. If there is any equipment pertaining to soldiery omitted, it is because it isn't obtainable.

"Look at this once, Joan!"

Hap awesomely lifted a lid to a camp chest and I beheld three complete khaki uniforms all for the grade of captain. He thrust a bugle before my eyes and then blew a blast that nearly raised the roof — I mean the fly.

The three young captains informed me that I was to be Joan of Arc. Haphiram wanted me to ride the Donnelly's white calf as a near-approach to a white steed, but I am doubtful. Calves have a burro-like way of kicking up their heels, and I don't want to risk my new white suit.

"This is surely the joy-zone!" declared Roger Kane when he came over to witness the camp.

"We will give you a mess-tent banquet the night of your return," I promised.

"That will sustain me," he said, "through the next two months when I shall be busy dictating to my stenographer."

"Is she pretty?" I asked quickly and felt how inane the inquiry was when he replied gravely: "My stenographer is a young man who wears lavender shirts and smokes cigarettes."

I couldn't resist saying insinuatingly: "It's simply grand for the boys to have that glorious tent. I am so glad for them."

"I am thinking," he said trying to speak casually, "that Joan of Arc will enjoy it as much as her three little captains."

Then he quickly changed the subject and I didn't venture to say more.

He was going to leave on the train that night, and when he came to bid us good-bye he shook hands with all the Haphazards, but when he came to me, to my surprise he stooped and kissed me very gently, almost reverently. I was not at all embar-

rassed, strange to say. Some way I had an odd little feeling that he was in reality kissing the little sweetheart who died.

After he had gone I was too lonely to write. I sat down before the pictures of you and Mark and added one of Roger to my little group. I have missed him today, but he is coming back, and oh, daddy, as glad as I shall be to see him again, it will be as nothing compared to the joy of seeing you once more. Just as soon as you have dredged just a little gold, let the rest stay in the sands and come home to me.

The only solace I shall find in your getting peeved about the Bureau business is that it may hurry you back. If you knew how hard I hit the trail of the postman watching for your letters!

I kiss you good-night.

JOAN.

June 13th.

DARLING DADDY LYNN:

THINK of having Christmas for a straight week and in summer, too! Three days after my last letter to you, one of the big music companies delivered a Victrola at Mildew Manse! It is a godsend to shut-in Grandma, and Mrs. Haphazard says it makes the dishwashing seem livelier and when she has something to be done in a hurry, she puts on a double-quick-time record. It is lovely for dancing, as we are now just three couples. Roger Kane adored to watch us dance, though like Mark, he doesn't dance himself.

The following day came the very latest invention in wheel-chairs for Grandma with all conveniences attached — electric flash-light, reading desk, lunch tray, thermos bottle and book-holder.

And of all the gifts that the Magi could bestow this is the loveliest and the best!

When Jo and Barry were out of hearing, I declared: "Whoever he is, Roger Kane, or another, I love him for this!" And

the Haphazards all cried: "So do I! So do I!"

"It's no use," I announced, "whether he likes it or not, I am going to write to him. I'll not call him by name, and I'll carry out the farce of giving it to Barry or Jo to mail."

"I could say my prayers more fervently if I thanked some one besides Providence," said Grandma.

"You bet your neck I'll write him," cried Herk.

"Me, too," chimed in Heck.

Haphiram was already blotting his cheeks. He is nearsighted and his eyelashes scratch the paper. Here are the letters we wrote our "unknown" friend, alias Roger Kane:

FROM GRANDMA:

"*Dear kind Friend,* — For such you are to me — to us all. It's a heart of gold that thought of such a gift to me, and that you may have your Heart's Dearest Desire, is the wish of

"GRANDMA HAZARD."

JOINT LETTER FROM HAPHIRAM, HERCULES AND HECTOR:

"WHOEVER you are, you're a bully good scout and we want you to let us tell you so some day. We're awfully much obliged, specially for Grandma. And it's great to hear the Victrola, but we can't help being gladdest about those ripping good tents and all the things that went with them We'd like to do something besides thank you.

"Signed:

"HAP
"HERK } *Captains Three*"
"HECK

MINE:

"DEAR SUMMER SANTA CLAUS:

"IT'S hard to write to you, for there are no words I know that can express at all how we love you and love your way of remembering us. You must know boys and soldiers from A to Izzer to have thought of sending that tent and all its equipment. You must love music to send us such a

beautiful Victrola and the fine selection of records. As for Grandma's chair, well! if you had committed the blackest sin on earth, that one gift would have blotted it out forever.

"You won't let us thank you personally, but you can't prevent our loving you and we do — all of us — not for the gifts you sent, but for the dear thought and kindness that suggested them. Anything we have that you want is yours.

"JOAN OF ARC.

"In behalf of the Mildew Manse Militia."

WE gave our letters to Barry, who promised to see that the right party received them.

Later that evening when I was sitting alone in the hammock, Barry left Hally to join me.

"Joan," he said, "Summer Santa Claus wants to give *you* something — just for you, yourself."

"No," I refused. "That's why I adore his presents and himself, because he is doing things for the Haphazards."

"That's just the point. Affection for the

Haphazards is the bond between you. A loves B, C loves B; ergo, C —"

"Oh, Barry," I interrupted impatiently, "don't let any more unknown quantities enter into this gift problem. Besides the tent is for me as well as for the boys; I occupy it as much as the Captains Three. And I'd like to know what I could enjoy more than I do the Victrola! No; Summer Santa Claus has done enough for me."

"Joan," he asked abruptly after a little silence, "have you forgotten Mark?"

He's always harping on Mark.

"No," I replied lightly. "I have not forgotten Mark, but I am of the opinion that Mark has forgotten me."

"You don't think that," he said gravely, "and you know you don't mean it. If you knew what love meant, you'd know that a man like Mark would want all or nothing — that it is adding insult to injury to offer a sister's love in lieu of a lover's."

This from commercial Barry. I suppose he knows more about love than I do. I remember the look in his eyes when he came into the room and saw Hally holding Heck.

The night was full of June smells and

sounds. Oh, I'd like to be in love on a night like this — I think I would!

"Barry, what is it Summer Santa Claus wants to give me for 'just me'?" I asked.

"Only something that you could accept from anyone — violets!"

Only something I could accept from anyone! *Violets* — the flower that has the nameless charm for me, a charm so different from any other flower. Roger Kane knows how I love them. He said he always associated me with them. I care very very much for Roger Kane, but violets seem to belong to the memories of other days — days with you and Mark. Then, there's the chance that he may be the hermit. Violets from him — from anyone but you — and Mark?"

"No, Barry," I replied emphatically. "I don't want any unknown giving me violets. As you truly say I don't know what love means; but, still I have a certain amount of sentiment in me, and I want violets to stay in the background with my old days."

"Forgive me, Joan. I did you wrong. You have not forgotten Mark!" and with a tantalizing, little laugh, he strolled away.

"Barry!" I cried.

He stopped.

"Changed your mind about the violets?" he asked.

"No; I merely wanted to tell you that I could no more forget Mark than you could forget — Aline; but you needn't jump to wrong conclusions just because I said what I did."

"All right!" he replied lightly. "I'll tell Summer Santa Claus that you don't want violets from him because they are associated with another man!"

"If you do, Barry Walters," I said, "I'll write him myself. You know perfectly well that I know who he is. I'll tell him that if he wants to send me flowers or anything else he can do so openly and not anonymously, that I won't have it. He'll know then that you let me surmise who he is."

"All right, Joan. I won't. I'll just tell him you want no personal gift."

I had a letter from him — Roger Kane, I mean. It had to be, he wrote, either a long one dictated to the lavender-shirted man or else a scrawl of a few words, because his eyes are troubling him again. I am glad

he chose the latter way. It was a darling little note.

The next day Barry delivered a dozen pairs of gloves for Hally from Summer Santa Claus. He said that Tip's turn had also come. I looked for this remembrance to be in the form of silk socks, ties, or maybe a scarf pin, or something for personal adornment.

"Summer Santa Claus," said Barry, "thinks, Tippy, that you ought to start in some business that will be worth while — a place where you will stick. And he advises that you turn to account your unerring taste in clothes."

"Dear me!" I thought, "is Roger Kane going to advise Tip to turn valet or something in the man-tailor line?"

"He knows," continued Barry, "of a young chap with a modest capital who is anxious to start a little business and he has proposed to him to take you in with him, on a salary at first, but with a view to working up to a junior partnership. The business is an exclusive haberdasher's shop, and your inherent knowledge of styles should stand you in good stead. You will meet

your future partner at my office tomorrow and arrange matters."

Why in the world had no one ever thought of this business for Tippecanoe? He has always been a square peg in a round hole in every position he has held, but this will be the line of lines for him. Roger Kane, alias Summer Santa Claus, is wise as well as generous. Tip's shiftfulness used to disturb him.

Today came Mrs. Haphazard's present, a camera. So every nook and cranny of Mildew Manse will be snapped, as will the Haphazards en masse from Grandma in her new chair to the twins and Peter Paul and a few of Little Jumping Joan thrown in. You will get one each of all the pictures, and so will Roger Kane.

Your last letter had a good deal to say about Mark. I am glad to hear that he seems "older and steadier," and that he is "quieter and more reserved." You rather intimate that it is because of what happened before he went to Alaska. Daddy, I acted for the best.

Buro Goudolaris came down to the restaurant in a brand-new baby cab today and was placed on exhibition. He blinked out-

rageously at his namesake, and squirmed like spaghetti when his papa gurgled Greek to him.

As I sat by my window in Oregon tonight, I could see between tree tops a few lone stars. I wondered if you could see them, too. Thoughts of you brought remembrance of Mark and then you were both obliterated for a few moments as I fell into a revery about Roger and all he had done for the Haphazards — for me, and our pleasure. It isn't a matter of the money he has lavishly spent, but the subtle, Christmas, gift-love spirit that comes to us so fervidly on the eve of the three hundred and fifty-eighth day of the year — when we see the municipal Christmas tree silhouetted against a misty background of white space with its illuminating, electric messengers of colored lights, or when we look at the eager faces of little children clustered at toy shop windows. The keynote he had struck in his impromptu selections made me long to put in words, though he would never read them, my appreciation of his sweetness, so I wrote with the freedom and fullness with which we write only when we know that our production will be torn into bits.

"YOU DARLING SUMMER SANTA CLAUS:

"I WISH you were not of flesh and blood, but were really the old mythical Saint Nicholas of childhood days so I could write this letter impersonally and with that childish trust of long ago, put it up the chimney. For you have lifted these gifts far above the usual donations.

"'By their *presents* (excuse the homonym) ye shall know them' is surely true in your case, and be you young or old, man or superman, I love you not for your generosity, for any man of affluence can be generous, but for putting yourself in the place of the ones who are to receive. You may be old in years but you are young in heart, young in years, but old in your knowledge of the hunger in the hearts of those less liberally provided for than yourself. In either case I am yours, now and forever, and may the happiness of the Haphazards be thenceforth thine. And, with Grandma Haphazard I wish for you the fulfillment of all the desires of your heart.

"Trustingly,

"JOAN LYNN"

After I wrote this gushing appreciation, daddy, I leaned back in my chair and dreamed until I was too sleepy to do anything but get into bed. In the morning I was too late in arising to do anything but slip into clothes and make one grand rush for breakfast and the Bureau. At noon I recalled my midnight effusion and went home to destroy it, but could find no trace of it. Investigation revealed the mortifying fact that the methodical Herk had been the chambermaid in my room that morning and he discovered the letter on my table, sealed it and delivered it to Barry who forwarded it!

There was nothing I could do. And yet somehow, Roger Kane is so sweet and understanding he will draw no wrong conclusions. I asked Barry to explain that it was not intended to be sent. Barry's high glee jarred some way.

I had another letter and a book from Roger Kane today. I am so happy that all these nice things have come to the Haphazards. If the mortgage were only lifted! But we can't have everything. I don't want everything, father. I just want you — with all my heart. Good-night and pleasant dreams; may they all be of JOAN.

June 19th.

OH, father, father! It has come! Like a bolt from the blue. Mildew Manse can hold out no longer against the mortgages. The owner of them lived in the far west, and his agent here has always collected the rent — when he could — and when the Haphazards ever gave the matter any thought at all, they concluded that he would, doubtless, be content with always just holding the mortgages until he came to own the place and then he would rent it to them. But he died quite suddenly, and his heir at once began to convert all securities into ready cash. He sent on word to the agent to take over the property here at once and sell it, or foreclose, or something like that.

When the agent called to break the news to us, he caused a panic all right. You see you get used to a suspended sword as time goes on, and when it does finally fall, it brings as much of a shock as though you had never suspected that it was dangling.

It was the first time I had ever seen the

Haphazards downcast. When the agent came back and put up a "For Sale" sign, it was just as though the undertaker had been here and hung a streamer of crepe from the door.

By dinner time we had rallied sufficiently to talk it over and see what could be done to save the ship. One conclusion was instantly reached. It could not be bought by the Haphazards. To be sure the wet day fund, which by this time had reached the one-hundred dollar proportions insisted upon by Jo and which the revenue from my room rent and breakfasts had greatly helped, was available. The little boys at school bragged loudly of their bank account, but Jo quickly disillusioned us as to any air-castles we had been building on this reserve. It wouldn't be sufficent, he said, to make even a first payment, and any one of the solicitous candidates for a residence on "the" street could pay spot cash.

It was unanimously agreed that Father Hazard was not to be told of the calamity until his return. No sense in speeding ill news.

Aline was away when the agent called.

As she came home she saw the sign and it was as startling as handwriting on the wall. She rushed into the house, but instead of being stunned as the rest of us then were, the sign seemed to arouse a fighting spirit in our dreamy young princess.

"I won't live in any other house!" she declared with a gleam in her eyes. "Jo Hazard, you've got to save it!"

"How can I, Aline?" he asked sorrowfully.

"How? Somehow, anyhow!"

"That doesn't tell me how to raise the money to buy the place," he said with a half smile, a touch of the Haphazard levity returning. "I see no way, Aline."

"Make a way, Jo!" she demanded.

"Yes, Jo; there must be some way," observed Mrs. Haphazard hopefully and Grandma remarked confidently: "Jo always has found some sort of a way out of everything for us." Hally contributed to the cheerful reminder that things always did work out right in time.

Herk and Heck came in with air triumphal, and announced that they had fixed things by tearing down that "measly old sign," and told Jo he could do the rest.

Poor Jo! It was hard on him to have the burden shoved entirely on his young shoulders and to know that he was not equal to producing the result they expected. He found a moment's respite in sternly ordering the twins to restore the sign at once.

"The sign isn't ours, you know," he said a little bitterly. "Nothing is ours. It's a good thing that man wouldn't mortgage our furniture."

"There's no mortgage on the tents," said Haphiram, speaking for the first time since the disaster. "We can pitch them on the Bluff and live in them."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea," observed Mrs. Haphazard reflectively.

"I should think you might give us a suggestion, Joan," said Hap reproachfully.

"I wish father had some money," I replied, "but he hasn't yet. I'll sell my lot and Jo and Aline can sell theirs, and there's the wet day fund — and —"

"Only a drop in the bucket," appraised Jo.

"We can surely borrow of some one," I persisted. "I'll write Summer — Roger Kane. He —"

"Roger Kane," said Jo, "is very lavish

with his money, but this would be too big a debt for anyone, and Joan, I won't let you ask anyone to advance the money. We could never pay it back."

California was in mourning that night. We all went early to bed for want of anything else to do.

The next morning Jo walked down town with me. The look in his eyes as he kissed his mother on leaving the house kept me silent, and we went down the street without speaking. We had not gone very far when a burly, red-faced man stopped us.

"Oh, Hazard," he called. "I was just on my way to see you. I have bought the place where you live!"

"You have bought it!" exclaimed Jo in consternation.

He had been hoping against hope, I suppose, for a reprieve — a little longer lease.

"Yes; I've just paid over the money for the whole shebang, and Tomlin says I can have immediate possession."

"You wouldn't care to sell it, I suppose," asked Jo faintly.

Poor fellow! He couldn't let go the last clinging straw.

"I should say not!" declared the horrid, red-faced man. "I've always had my eye on that old place for a home. I am going to put up the finest mansion in town."

We walked on still silent. I looked down a side street and I saw — oh, daddy, what I saw saved the day.

I left Jo and ran after the red-faced man. I heard Jo call after me, but it didn't halt me.

"What are you going to do with the old house?" I asked breathlessly, when I had overtaken the brute.

"Tear it down, of course," he replied.

I beckoned wildly to Jo who was waiting for me.

"He is going to tear down Mildew Manse," I informed Jo when he had come up to us.

"Well, what of it?" he asked stupidly.

"What are you going to do with all the material?" was my next inquiry.

"Pay some one to haul it away, I suppose," he replied.

Jo got me then, a little gleam of the Haphazard hope creeping into his troubled eyes.

"Will you give me the house if I agree to get it off the premises at once?" he asked.

"I should say I would and throw in a few thanks besides. But what in the world can you do with all that old, rotten timber, Hazard? It's not fit to use again."

"I can use it," Jo assured him. "Will you come into a lawyer's office with me now, Mr. Payne, and have it put down on paper?"

"That won't be necessary, Hazard. I'm only too glad to get rid of the old stuff so easily."

Jo's insistence prevailed and they left me to go to a lawyer's office. Jo called after me to come home to luncheon.

On my way to Mildew Manse at noon I met Barry and when I told him the sad news he went with me. We were the last arrivals, and the little air of suppressed elation in Jo's demeanor had brought a pleasant stir of expectancy to the family.

When we had gathered about the table he announced:

"Ed Payne has bought this place and he says that he is going to put up the finest house in town."

It was quite evident that his news had fallen short of expectation.

"And," he pursued, working up to his climax, "he's given me this house, if I will take it off his hands."

"I suppose you mean," drawled Haphiram, "that he'll give it to you if you'll take it off the lot, not off his hands."

"The timber is too old, I suppose, to use in rebuilding," observed Mrs. Haphazard. "Still it would be a sort of satisfaction to tear it down ourselves instead of being obliged to look on and see it demolished by strangers."

"We are not going to tear it down," replied Jo. "Hap was right. The condition to the gift is that I take it off the lot. I went to the street commissioner this morning and got a permit and I have engaged a house-moving company to come tomorrow and move Mildew Manse."

There was no doubt now about his creating a sensation, and all tongues fell to wagging at once.

"Where will you move the house to?" asked Tippecanoe.

"Why, just move around in it," said Herk. "We can bivouac the way soldiers do."

"Silly!" cried Haphiram. "We'll move

it on Jo's lot, of course. Gee! It will be handy to go in swimming and skating."

"It must be on my lot, too," pleaded Aline. "Isn't it grand that the two are adjoining! We'll put it on the dividing line. Then we'll have a yard all around it."

"And the cellar, Jo," reminded Mrs. Haphazard anxiously. "I must have a cellar."

"The men are out there now digging it right on the dividing line between the lots as Aline wants it. It will be slow work moving, you know, so the cellar will be ready to receive the Manse when she arrives."

"But where, Jo," asked Mrs. Haphazard, "are we to live while Mildew Manse is en route?"

"Why, right here in the house, of course," replied Jo. "Just as Herk proposed. The moving men said all you would have to do would be to take the pictures off the wall and pack away brick a brac and topply things, and that you'd be just as comfortable as though the house was stationary."

Now he had scored a hit. I should never thought of so simple a solution.

"It will be cheap and convenient," approved Mrs. Haphazard in relieved tones. "I shouldn't know how to pack and move all our stuff."

"What a splendid opportunity for me to see the city!" exclaimed Grandma excitedly. "I'm tired to death of looking at High Street, Mildew Manse grounds and the Coverley's back yard."

"It'll be just like taking a trip," cried Hally delightedly. "We'll call it our summer vacation."

"And the woodshed will be the observation car!" announced Haphiram.

"We'll blow the bugle at every street crossing," chimed in Herk.

"The bugler," planned Heck, "can sit on the roof and the color-bearer can wave the flag. Gee! It will be great."

"I am wondering," observed Tippecanoe, "how the grocer, the butcher and the postman can ever keep track of us. We'll have to send out an itinerary for the trip to all our tradesmen and friends. I am glad it's not near election time, for we wouldn't know in which ward to register."

"Jo," said his mother admiringly, "you

certainly are the mainstay of this family. What would we do without you?"

"It was some clever idea, Jo," approved Barry.

"What makes you think it my idea when the Lady of the Bureau of Suggestions sits right here in our midst!"

"I didn't get this suggestion at the Bureau," I said after the applause. "When that red-faced Ed Payne said so brutally that he was going to tear down the house, and I was having ghastly visions of Mildew Manse reduced to a pile of wreckage, I looked down Zenith Street and saw a house being moved. My mind's eye then conceived our house on rollers. I only wish we could take the yard, too."

"You want the earth, Joan," said Hap.

"Certainly, I want Mildew Manse earth," I retorted.

I wrote Roger Kane all about it today, and I know how he will feel. They are going to ask him to stay at Mildew Manse when he comes in August. The Coverleys always claim him, but they will be away at their mountain home by that time. I am

quite sure, daddy, that he will prefer to come to — us.

When I left California tonight, Haphiram quite embarrassed me by calling out: "Good-night, Mrs. Summer Santa Claus."

They were all very mirthful because I blushed. When will I overcome that frightfully young habit? Aline diverted attention from me by remarking: "I wonder why nothing is ever said about Mrs. Santa Claus? Such a kind, merry, old man couldn't be a bachelor. Anyway, Joan, I should love to be the wife of such a generous man as — Summer Santa Claus."

"Do you know," said Jo, looking at me meditatively, "I feel sure that some day Joan will be that happy woman."

Then I *did* blush. You should have seen Barry's scowl. Mark certainly has two firm friends, you and Barry. He might have three, if he wished.

I wonder if Jo's prophecy will come true. I don't know — yet. I think I rather like to think so.

I was again taking my leave, when Barry told me he had brought up a new record he wanted me to hear.

Oh, dear me, daddy! The record was an old hunting song that Mark used to sing and that you liked so much. Barry said Mark sang it at college until the boys wouldn't stand for it. I managed to keep back the tears, but it made me homesick for old days and you — and Mark. The man that sang for the record had a broad baritone and a rollicking quality in his voice like Mark, and it was almost as though I were listening to him. Please don't read him this, daddy.

I will keep you posted while we are on the move.

With all my love,

JOAN.

June 22d.

MY DADDY-DEAR:

WE'RE off! The next day after I last wrote you, we made preparations for the journey. We took down the pictures and wall decorations and carried them over to Mrs. Irving's. We made quite a procession, each laden with a pile of pictures and some passers-by remarked: "What in the world is that?" Haphiram impudently retorted: "It's moving pictures."

The three boys begged to be allowed to stay at home from school and watch the "start," but when the House-moving Company appeared they informed us that it would take a couple of days to get ready.

"One to make ready, two to begin, and I hope three's a go," said Hap disconsolately.

I met the teacher of the Fourth Grade that afternoon and she said she had had her hands full intercepting notes and muzzling whisperers, but that in spite of her vigilance, long before recess every boy in the school room knew that the "Haphazards' house was moving and the folks still living in it."

There are so many different kinds of additions to Mildew Manse, you know, that it required a lot of preliminary work, and it was a problem to keep the parts all coupled together like a railway train. Anyway, I judged so when I heard one of the workmen say what kind of a job *he* thought it was. They are evidently not used to moving families, and sometimes their language is "painful and free."

"It's a good thing we haven't a parrot," mildly commented Grandma.

Today they brought the merry-go-round horses and the ropes and told us they were all ready to be off.

Hally said it seemed as if we ought to put on our hats and gloves. I looked for a little display of emotion when the first tug should come and we would be "foot-loose" as Grandma called it, but the Haphazards are far too matter-of-fact for any mock heroics. Jo has the most sentiment of any of them; odd, too, since he is the most practical.

As the house is as broad as the entire street and pavements, I asked the "head guy" as Herk calls him, if traffic would have to be held up.

"Oh, we ain't goin' to take her out broadsides," he replied, "but end-to, when we are once out in the street."

We looked something like a freight train when we pulled away.

I didn't blame the boys for open rebellion when school-time came. Their teacher was at the Goudolaris restaurant for luncheon, and she told me that in the first hour when Haphiram went to the blackboard she was conscious of a general stir of excitement. Her eyes moved swifter than the eraser, and she saw written in big letters: "She's started."

After school Haphiram came down to the Bureau to invite me to dinner. Barry, craving a "real shortcake," had sent up a whole crate of strawberries.

We started out in search of Mildew Manse and finally overtook it. They were all very much interested and entertained by their mode of transit. Grandma sat in her wheel chair on the platform of the woodshed because it made her dizzy to watch the horses go around. She was a whole block away from California.

I opened the front door and sat back in

the hall, as I felt a little conspicuous on the front steps. Moreover, they were occupied by a galaxy of youth.

One of Mark's and my dreams used to be to travel by caravan. Those pictures of the forty-niners crossing the desert in their covered wagons always thrilled us. Once when we were in a small town over night and saw some gipsy wagons, Mark planned for them to steal me, so he could dash after me in mad pursuit and be captured before he effected a rescue. Alas! The gipsies would have none of me and set their dogs on Mark. To travel with a circus would have been the zenith of bliss. We never once thought of traveling by house. It beats every method of touring I ever heard of for cheapness and comfort. Everything I used to wish for seems to be coming to me this year. But, oh, daddy, daddy! I am not happy. Not really happy. I love the Haphazards and Barry and Aline and — Summer Santa Claus, but I'd trade them all off for *you*. I wish I hadn't been "a good little Joan" like you told me to be and stayed behind. As if I would have minded the rough life! It doesn't seem to have

been as rough as you expected it would be, either.

At night when the workmen left, Mildew Manse was "switched" for the night. We drew all the shades and sat down to a dinner for which Mrs. Haphazard made apologies. She said she found it very distracting to perform her household duties in the midst of such fascinating diversion.

Grandma is quite rejuvenated by the novelty of the passing sights. Everyone seemed happy and perfectly at home save Peter Paul, who is the only one of the animals taken into our Noah's Ark. He evidently misses his boon companions of his pergola home.

After dinner we sat out on the side porch of Winnipeg, that being the most inconspicuous place. We observed the conventions by foregoing the pleasure of listening to the Victrola as we didn't want to attract any more attention to the house than necessary or have an applauding street audience.

Barry brought a gift to the boys from Summer Santa Claus of a season ticket to the ball games.

"And Joan, if you will call at Jo's office

tomorrow, you'll find a peach of a canoe ready to be launched. The giver thought you would not think it too personal."

I couldn't remember that I had ever told Roger Kane how Indian-like I was in the management of river craft, but Hap admitted having described the prowess I attained when the yard was afloat.

"He's a Jim Dandy!" chorused the boys. "Why don't we give him something?"

"We surely ought to, but how can we?" I asked, "unless we know his tastes. Give us a wee hint, Barry."

"He'll be sure to like anything you give him," evaded Barry.

"Let's give him something money can't buy," I proposed.

"I'll tell you what we can do," suggested Hap. "We can give him a good time. We'll write and invite him to visit us."

"Hap Hazard, you are a genius!" I cried. "He'll have to answer such a letter. Shall it be a joint one?"

They all agreed that it should be and that I was to do the writing. I told him how much we all wanted him to pay us a visit and if he would come at any time after we

were settled at the end of our present journey, we'd do anything in our power to give him a good time. When I had written this much, I called them in and read the letter, and they dictated their messages. We all signed it and I added "R. S. V. P." in the corner.

Herk explained it meant "Remember, some vacation promised!"

When Barry came to go home, he thought some one must have stolen his car, and great excitement prevailed until Haphiram remembered that Barry had come before "quitting time," and the house had "gone some" after his arrival.

It will seem odd to sleep in the street to-night. I wonder in what little Alaskan town my daddy sleeps? I hope his Little Jumping Joan will creep into his dreams. I wish he might know in what safe keeping she is.

A fond good-night to him from his

JOAN.

June 25th.

FATHER-DEAR:

WE are "going some" now. We are way down in the business portion of the city to-night and are all perfectly in love with this unique way of moving and living combined.

It is somewhat difficult for such of us as go out by the day to find our happy home at night. The "head guy" tells us each morning about where they think they will be by "quitting time." Sometimes the forecast is more or less non-committal. To-day he said: "If it ain't down to Madison it'll be about by Sixth, unless some of the props give out. Of course if everything goes without a hitch, we might make Quincy."

The other night when I came home at the corner of Main and First Streets where a turn was to be made, I found Mildew Manse swung half way round, the woodshed resting impudently upon the lawn of the court house in utter defiance of the little wooden warnings to grass trespassers. Hally had wheeled Grandma down a plank to

the paved walk and across the lawn, and she was enjoying to the utmost her twilight hour 'neath the judicial oaks watching the passers-by and the roller skaters.

Our nights aren't especially restful since we have come down near the business district.

There was a night of horrors as harrowing to me as those in Kipling's *La Nuit Blanche* Mark was so fond of. Has Mark a volume of Kipling with him? I miss the one from which we used to read aloud and mark. We always did agree on books and writers. Come to think of it, we think very much alike on most things except dancing and the use of face powder.

I'll try to describe the "dreadful night." It began with some joy-riders crashing into the front porch between the hours of twilight and street light. They shattered our nerves and their headlights. The jar was so great we feared Mildew Manse would come off her rollers, but she withstood the attack valiantly.

Haphiram went to the front door and informed them this was no garage, but a house.

The next disturbance was a head-on collision with a hook and ladder truck which came around the corner in a crack-the-whip style.

Soon after this excitement there was a rear end attack from a runaway milk wagon from which disaster Peter Paul made profit. He has lapped milk steadily ever since, and was more thorough than a mop would have been. I guess he thought he had found the land of Canaan.

They are moving the house the long way, and fortunately Grandma's room is near the middle, so she didn't get but slight returns from these various collisions.

I was awakened from my next nap by some hilarious marauders who had found a convenient lodging on the steps. A police ambulance came clanging down the street to the delight of the captains three who nearly fell out of the window in their excitement of watching the "cops yank the boobs," as Herk expressed it. So you see we don't lack for adventures.

When Barry came in to-night he told us he had received an answer in the form of a day letter from Summer Santa Claus.

"Summer Santa Claus," it read, "will be most happy to accept the hospitality of Mildew Manse and, if convenient, should like to set the date of his arrival for the twenty-fifth of July. He earnestly hopes that each member of the household, including Miss Lynn, will fulfill the promises made in the letter of invitation."

This was certainly good news. It will be like looking forward to Christmas, and wasn't it cunning in him to choose the twenty-fifth of the month?

When Barry was leaving he slipped into my hand a sealed note.

"For you, alone," he whispered.

I hurried up to Oregon to read my own little letter from *him*. It was typewritten. If he only knew how needless it was for him to try to conceal his identity. I have been of two minds as to whether I wanted him to answer the letter that was not intended for his eyes. Sometimes I resented his entirely ignoring it, and again I told myself his silence was due to his inherent delicacy; but when I held it in my hand I knew I had wanted it all the time — really, daddy, it is the dearest letter I ever read. At first I

thought I would not send you a copy, but would keep it for you to read after you have met him. I can't wait, though, so here it is

MY WEE JOAN:

"Not one of the little remembrances I have made could have given one-tenth of the joy that was mine when I read your little letter which but for that blessed boy, would have been 'the letter that never came.'

"I feel, somehow, that you think you have guessed who I am. Your guess, then, is wrong. For you do not know me and I am yet a worshipper from afar. But on the midsummer Christmas day I hope to see you and tell you something that has been in my heart for many years — something I thought buried, but you have revived old memories and the witching sweetness of your letter has made them most vivid.

"I love the name of Summer Santa Claus which you gave me. I am fortunate to be allowed the pleasure of giving and above all to be held, though most undeservedly, so generously in your thoughts.

"I am glad I am of flesh and blood; but, please, please keep for me the childish trust,

like the one that made you believe in the stocking and the chimney.

"If I am young in heart, what difference make my number of years. I *am* old in my hunger of heart.

"I pray for the granting of your wish for me — 'the fulfillment of the desire of my heart.' I have but one.

Yours now and forever,

"SUMMER SANTA CLAUS"

Don't you love it, daddy? He has not deceived me with his little mask of pretending he is a stranger and a worshipper from afar. I know what he wants to tell me on the twenty-fifth of July — the story of his young life and the sweetheart who died and of whom I remind him. I wonder, do I want to hear it? I shrink from sad stories.

I adore his letter and I hadn't half guessed the sweetness and depth of his nature.

Write me as often as you can. I need your letters and you, my father.

YOUR OWN LITTLE JOAN.

June 29th.

A WHOLE week, father! But it makes no difference to you how far apart the letters are, of course. It's getting near Nome-time, though. Summer vacation, and the little boys are like young colts in a pasture. The last day of school found them so far away from Mildew Manse they had to take a street-car home.

I must tell you how we spent Sunday en route. The moving men left us on Saturday night tied up between two churches. I don't know whether it was intentional, for our convenience or theirs.

To avoid publicity and the curious gaze of churchgoers, the shades were kept drawn and Grandma remained indoors.

"We don't need to go to church," said Hally. "We can easily hear two services from here."

"Those," announced Haphiram, "who prefer the Episcopal service can seat themselves at the east window; and those who want the Baptist service can take the west windows."

It was the first time in years that Grandma had heard an organ, and I think it made her

a little sad. At sermon time, she left the east window and was wheeled to the west one, so she had "a small piece of each."

The passing of Mildew Manse and the Haphazards is really harder on poor little Aline than on anyone. Changes are always so much more of a trial for the one who is left. Poor little me! Daddy, I'd have died of homesickness if it hadn't been for my home with the Haphazards.

The novelty of moving has worn off and we shall all be glad to anchor. We have managed to see every part of the town from the fashionable residences to rented houses, business blocks, factory precincts and settlements. We are now in the stretch of open beyond which the better class of houses—suburban residences begin.

I had a darling letter from you to-day. Also a letter and a book, which we are discussing, from Roger Kane. We had a piece of good news. The man who owns the property across the river has written that he has associations with this city that makes him desirous of doing something for the public service, so he is going to give land along

the river for a boulevard and park. Think of that, daddy! Our lot will double in value.

It is very warm tonight, dear, and I will write some more soon, if not before.

July 2nd.

WE'RE here, daddy! Backed on to the double lot and the new cellar to-day. I think the moving men got tired of the long trip, too, and were impatient to intern Noah's Ark. I didn't know but what we would be arrested for speeding the last two days. The horses went around so fast they met themselves coming back, and we all rolled along sniffing the river air, and eager to get into dry dock.

"It does seem good to be on terra firma once more," sighed Grandma, and Heck repeating her remark to Jo said Grandma was "so glad to get on vice versa."

Oregon looks on the river, and I know I shall enjoy the night, but oh, how I wish it were in our own home nest we were snuggling tonight! I'm homesick — homesick for you, daddy. Come soon to your

LITTLE JUMPING JOAN.

July 4th.

DADDY:

THIS letter is on the installment plan, but I'll finish it up to-night, though it will be very late. We lost a couple of blinds, two window screens, a flower box and a few other things en route, which kept the boys busy going back to hunt up the missing parts and put them in place.

Wilkie Haphazard arrived on an early train this morning. Jo planned to meet him at the station and tell him the property had been sold and then surprise him by bringing him to the old home in its new settings.

But the plans of mice, men and Haphazards gang aft aglee, and things conspired to prevent a scheduled program. A street-car blockade made Jo ten minutes late in reaching the station and there was no sign of Wilkie, so he hurried to the old home where he found his father looking dazedly at the crumbling remains of the cellar.

"Was it a cyclone, Jo?" he asked.

"In a way, yes; Merkell foreclosed with the swiftness of a cyclone or an earthquake."

"And we lost all, Jo? When did it happen?"

"June nineteenth. Ed Payne bought it."

"He lost no time in pulling down the old place. Did you find a house with a reasonable rent."

"We are all moved and settled, father," Jo said leading the way to the cab followed by his dazed father.

On the way out here, Jo tried to question his father about his trip, but Wilkie had but one thought — the loss of Mildew Manse.

"So the old home is in ruins," he sighed for the tenth time.

"Not much! Look out here, father!"

The taxi had stopped and they got out.

"You see," explained Jo. "Payne gave us the old house and we moved it on to Aline's and my lots."

Something shone in Wilkie's eyes as he came up the front walk where we stood in a row in front of the house, just as if we had been grouped for a kodak picture.

When the last skyrocket had gone up, we had the Victrola music. And father, *their*

father, said how many good things had come to him and his in the last few weeks, and Haphiram exclaimed: "Our run of good luck started when we got Joan."

And Wilkie put his arm about me and said I'd have to be his littlest daughter now his own little girl was going to leave him.

I don't want to be his "littlest daughter," daddy. I want to be just yours.

Barry told us he had a message from Summer Santa Claus to Wilkie. That he hadn't sent him anything, because he already had so much — a dear mother, a loving wife, a bonny daughter, fine sons, a home and Joan Lynn! What more than these could a man want?

And Wilkie's voice shook as he echoed: "What more, indeed!"

Oh, father, it was a beautiful message, and it was sweet in him to include me. It sounded like you, and you'd have done all these things that my Summer Santa Claus has done if you had had the money, wouldn't you, father dear?

Around about Christmas time when I was a little girl and when I was kindly disposed to everyone, I used to feel so sorry for Santa

Claus, because he was always giving things and getting nothing in return. But this Santa Claus, this flesh and blood Santa Claus, shall have anything I can give him.

I am going to bed now. I just went to my window and saw a lone skyrocket shoot across the sky. It made me think of a falling star. And falling stars recall August. August means Nome, and Nome means you will read my letters and know my friends.

Wilkie's homecomings always make me homesick. And I could cry this minute, but I won't. I'll kiss your picture and say,

Good-night,

JOAN.

July 11th.

DADDY-MINE:

THE ground is being broken for Barry's house and two bungalows are being built beyond Mildew Manse. So, you see, things are moving. I wonder when our house will be started?

Jo called again upon Mr. Irving and informed him that his conditions were now fulfilled. Mildew Manse was theirs to have and to hold without encumbrances, and they had all taken a solemn vow to forego the mortgage method of meeting expenses. Hally's future was provided for. Tip was contributing to the family support. As for the salary proviso, Jo told him he had had an offer from a real estate firm at a salary of thirty dollars per week.

Mr. Irving is a man of his word, and of course he had to yield to Jo, now that he has made good; but the strange part of it is that he yielded gracefully. Since the day of Aline's river adventure he has shown a different attitude toward Jo. Then, too,

he realizes how necessary Jo, the Haphazards and Mildew Manse are to her happiness.

The two betrothed couples are having an aftermath of sparking. I don't want to be *de trop*, and am getting quite skilful in effacing myself gracefully and frequently. I am very much in the background these days, for Tip cohorts with an extremely stylish sister of his partner. The three boys, my former playmates, belong to a "Riverside Nine." So I am alone, very much alone. However, it's only two weeks to the second coming of Santa Claus.

Suppose — I love to suppose — he isn't Roger Kane, but really a "stranger who has worshipped from afar!" It makes my heart thump a little to think of it. Anyway, he will be a man — a Heaven-sent man. Life is lonely — especially life in the summer, moonlight time — without a man. His visit will tide me over until you come home.

This is only a note compared to my previous ones, but there's no more to tell, and I am sleepy. I am not very happy to-night, maybe because it is such a lovely summer moonlight night and everyone around here but your little Joan is "roamin' in the

gloamin'." That is not the reason. It's because there is a letter overdue from you.

Good-night, daddy,

YOUR LOVING AND LONELY JOAN.

July 24th.

DADDY-DARLING:

I HAVE sent you only cards this last fortnight because there was nothing to tell. Every day looked alike to me, and there's nothing more to happen to the Haphazards, I guess.

I still love it way up here on the river bluffs and the nights are simply heavenly, but the moonlight on the water is so beautiful it makes your heart ache when you are all by yourself. The lovers politely urge me to accompany them on their rides and motors and river excursions, but they adore me, I know, because I don't accept their invitations.

Do you know, Father Lynn, that I have enough saved toward our house to take me to Alaska and back? Sometimes I have a great mind to join you just for a little visit. I would if it were not for Mark. He doubtless is still peeved and I might drive him away and I shouldn't want to do that when he is such a help to you. I think he might have sent me a line or a message — something besides the totem pole card from

Seattle last spring. I mustn't forget the birthday present though.

I don't even hear from Roger Kane lately, except dictated letters which don't mean anything. His eyes are bothering again and he doesn't dare use them. Poor Roger! He is lonely, too!

Tomorrow! Who will he be? Here's the last dip of ink in this bottle.

July 25th.

THIS has been too exciting a day to think of buying ink, but I must tell you everything, so here goes with a pencil or two. Daddy, daddy, I don't know whether I'd scold you, or hug you, or laugh or cry if I saw you right this minute. Well, you know in part, and there's some you don't know, so I shall begin at the beginning and tell you all.

This morning I awoke with my heart beating expectantly. We had an unusually elaborate breakfast, for how could we tell when he might come, or how — by train, motor, launch, street car, wheel-barrow or cart? We made up our minds we'd all stay at home throughout the day so as to be in readiness, but Jo told us that we were very foolish and that we should all go about our affairs in the usual way and take him "when or how he comes." Jo had a hunch that it would be at twilight, or maybe he'd stick to his role and come at midnight. I rather hoped myself that he would

wait until night; it would seem a little more interesting. I never did like matinées.

I went to the Bureau and had been there but a short time when what do you suppose arrived? Summer Santa Claus? No! a beautiful, huge bunch of violets. They were delivered by a local florist without a card. There was no doubt in my mind but that they were from "the coming man" and I fancied that he had arrived and was perhaps even then at Mildew Manse. Goudolaris let me have some finger bowls and I spread my violets out in them. They brought back old days, old memories, so closely! My heart came up into my mouth and the tears into my eyes. Every time any one came in the door, I expected. Every time the telephone rang, I expected; but nothing doing! And the violets kept right on getting in their reminiscence work.

I was leaning on the counter, my eyes shaded by my hand, planning to act on a sudden, wild impulse to leave this very night for Alaska and let — Roger Kane think me an ingrate, when suddenly a quarter was

shoved into my line of vision. I looked up quickly into the eyes of — Mark! And yet they weren't at all like his eyes. There was something strange in them — something that held me breathless.

"I want a question answered," he said quietly, yet in the old, Mark way. "Do you love Roger Kane?"

How did he know about Roger Kane!

"Mark," I gasped faintly. "Come in."

I opened the little railing gate.

"Tell me! When did you come? Where is daddy and —"

He came in and took my hand, and some way I felt that I must talk very fast and very hard.

"I came at three o'clock this morning," he replied. "I went to a hotel and told the clerk to call up a florist and have some violets sent to you; also to call me at nine o'clock. I see he remembered the violets, but he forgot the call. Your father is in Fairbanks and — But, Joan, my quarter? I've paid for an answer."

"When did you see Barry?"

"I haven't seen Phil since last fall."

"Then how did you know about the

Bureau and how much I charged for answers? And — Roger Kane?"

"From your letters."

"My letters?"

"Your letters to your father which we have read and re-read until they are in tatters."

"Why — when did you go to Nome?"

"We haven't been to Nome. But, Joan, I want my question answered. Now!"

Here was the old Mark with his same dictatorial way, barking up the wrong tree and arousing my antagonism.

I picked up the quarter from the counter and handed it to him.

"We are going up to Mildew Manse now," I said, "and when we are there, I will answer your question — maybe."

I put on my hat, restored the violets to their box and handed it to Mark to carry for me.

"Now, tell me," I said, as we went outside, "how you got my letters that were addressed to Nome."

"Is it too far to walk to Mildew Manse?" he asked, "or is there a street-car line out there? I can't talk when I am zipping along in a taxi."

I hailed a car. There were very few passengers aboard and none near us.

"Tell me!" I said impatiently.

"You see I didn't know about your absurd arrangements for letters to go to Nome until we were in Seattle. I told your father there was no sense of our waiting until August to hear from you, and he said he had begun to realize himself that it was a crazy plan. He sent a message to the postmaster at Nome to forward all mail to our first landing place, so we found two letters waiting for us when we landed."

"And you have had them all, right along?" I asked faintly. "And how much did daddy read to you from them?"

"He gave them all to me to read, naturally. He was wild when he read that first one about your coming here and opening this Bureau, but I persuaded him to cool down to the extent of cabling instead of returning. Then I advised him to read the second letter before cabling. When he learned how pleasantly you were located and that you were protected by a home, he felt quite different about the matter. Finally I persuaded him to leave things as they were."

"That is strange. I thought you would be the one to object strenuously; not father."

"Joan, when we left you in that tame little town, I was so completely obsessed by my own misery I had no thought for anything or anyone else, but after we had started west and I thought of lonely little you in such a place, I felt remorseful and selfish. I was really glad to find you had taken French leave, and I was glad you had chosen this city on account of good old Munk and Phil living here. So I further appeased your father by writing Phil to look after you and let me know if there was anything distasteful about the Bureau. And he answered so satisfactorily we had no more objections."

"And never told me that you were receiving my letters! Why in the world didn't daddy write me that you were having them forwarded and let me send them direct?"

"We talked it over and decided not to, because we loved your letters and we became so interested in the Haphazards, we feared if you knew we were reading them, you wouldn't write so freely or fully."

"Of course I wouldn't have," I replied. "Mark Shelby, daddy had no more right to let you read all those letters than he would have had to let you read my diary!"

"But Joan, you always let me read your diary, you know, when you kept one."

"Let you! You took it away from me forcibly and read it. That was why I stopped keeping one. But tell me about daddy and the dredger, and why you came and if you are going back and when —"

"Joan, I've only asked you one question, and you refused to answer. Yet you are reeling them off to me by the yard."

"Tell me!"

"I came to Seattle to fix up some business for your father. I've been back there twice. This time I came on to see you. You said this Roger Kane was coming, so I thought I'd beat him here. Of course I am going back. Your father is well, and the dredger is working much better than anything else your father has invented. I am afraid there isn't a fabulous fortune in it, though."

"I don't care. I can make money enough

to build a little house. I am glad since you have come on that you know all about the Haphazards, so they won't seem like strangers to you. Don't you love them?"

"Well," he answered slowly. "I didn't just love Jo, at first, but I liked him better when I found he was really engaged to Aline. I wanted to kick Tippy! Impudent young cub! But I forgave him when I saw you didn't care for him and that he was only a kid. You gave me a scare about Phil for a letter or two. He was too good a friend to steal you from me, and I don't believe you ever really meant to encourage him. Your father said not. We both felt that you meant nothing by what you wrote about those three; but — we both noticed something different in your attitude to Roger Kane. There was a reserve your father didn't like. That was the real reason I came, if you want to know."

"And by what right, Mark Shelby, do you come to find out anything about Roger Kane or — any one else?"

"By the right of your father's having sent me for just that purpose. He is naturally interested and determined to know what

kind of a man you were writing so much about."

"Why didn't you ask Barry?"

"You know, Joan, that if I were going to do any prying, I'd come right to headquarters and find out for myself."

We had come to the end of the street-car line, and a walk of a block brought us in sight of the river and the Bluff. Mark was very enthusiastic over the scenery.

"Look!" I said as we came up the hill, "do you see Mildew Manse?"

"I should have known it from your description, Joan. Sometimes, remembering your vivid imagination, I used to wonder if you weren't drawing on it for your pictures of the house and family. I was afraid it might all turn out to be another case of Marjorie Daw."

"I wonder," I remarked irrelevantly, "if *he* has come yet!"

He stood still.

"I suppose by *he* you mean — Roger Kane!" he growled.

"I don't know. I mean Summer Santa Claus. I suppose they are the same."

"If Roger Kane is here at Mildew Manse,

I am not coming in, not unless you answer my question."

"I will tell you when we are in the house and not a moment sooner," I answered, hedging for time.

Just then Hap, Herk and Heck came running to meet us.

"Joan! He has come! He is here!"

"And he is Roger Kane?" I asked.

"We don't mean here at the house. He is down town with Barry. He —"

Mark interrupted.

"You are Hap, I am sure. Tell me which is Herk and which Heck."

"I am Herk." "I am Heck," came in chorus.

"I know you from your picture," quoth Hap. "You are Mark."

"Yes," I answered. "He is Mark, and he knows all about you, for he read my letters. But tell me, Hap, who is Summer Santa Claus?"

"Barry wouldn't tell us. He is going to bring him up to luncheon and Hally is creaming chicken. You'll stay too," he added, turning to Mark.

"That depends upon whom Phil brings up and — something else."

We all went into the house and Mark — I adored him for it — stooped and kissed Grandma so sweetly, and then he kissed Mrs. Haphazard and looked as if he would like to greet Hally and Aline in the same manner.

"Did he kiss you, Joan, down at the Bureau?" asked Haphiram curiously.

"No;" I responded without even a blush. "He barely shook hands with me. He didn't seem at all glad to see me."

Mark came to me.

"I'll not kiss you now, either, Joan; not until you answer my question."

I couldn't dodge the issue any longer. I must tell him.

"Well," I said, taking a photograph from the mantel, "I don't care whether you kiss me or not, but maybe this picture of Roger Kane will answer your question."

He stared at the photograph, and then read what was written across it. I might as well 'fess up to you, now, daddy.

Roger Kane is seventy-three years old, and the picture was of himself and his wife and daughter who are now abroad. The inscription was "From the Kane family."

Mark came to me slowly with a look in his eyes that made my heart beat.

"Joan, you little witch, why did you do it?"

"I don't know why," I replied.

And I don't, daddy, honest.

Then he did kiss me — on the mouth — before them all. I was mad.

He told the Haphazards how I had "strung" you and him about Roger Kane, and the laugh was on me. I never will stand for that, you know. I felt for a moment that I hated him.

"I don't see," I said, "why father couldn't have come on the business instead of you."

The Haphazards all looked shocked and sorry, but Mark, of course, didn't mind in the least.

"Luncheon is ready, and we are going to sit right down and eat it," said Mrs. Haphazard, quickly going out to the dining-room. "The boys and Barry's friend can have theirs when they come."

I sat across the table from Mark, and he appeared to be in high glee. Every time he looked at me, he had an amused, exultant look that made me furious. It is always

the way; when I am almost near loving Mark, I find I hate him, and when I think I really hate him, he does something that makes me almost love him.

I hoped now that Summer Santa Claus would be a young man so I could flirt with him and avenge Mark's proprietary airs.

After luncheon we went out on the steps just as Jo came up. When I introduced him he laughed and said: "I know you better as Summer Santa Claus. Barry is looking everywhere for you. He missed you at the train this morning. Finally found you were registered at the Vincent, but you had left — "

"Is he— Mark, are you — " I gasped faintly.

"Yes, Joan," he said quite humbly. "I am Summer Santa Claus. Do you mind?"

I turned and fled into the house. He followed a little ways, but of course got lost and by the time Hap came to act as his guide I was out the back door, down the bluff and in my canoe. I crossed the river and landed at a lovely little cove I had discovered the day before. Then I made my way up the bank and into a little thicket.

Haphiram had betrayed my retreat. *Page* 231.

I simply had to be alone and adjust things. Not once had I even dreamed of connecting Mark with these beautiful presents to everyone. He has always been generous, of course, but never thoughtful. And how could I guess that he had read my letters. Then I tried with tingling shame to recall all the things I had written about Summer Santa Claus and my feelings toward him. I was burning when I thought of that last letter and the gushing way I had promised to do anything for him and love him.

I heard a splashing of water and looking through the bushes I saw Mark coming on a raft. Haphiram of course had betrayed my retreat.

Mark landed and soon found me.

"You might have known I came here to get away from you," I began.

"Surely Joan," he answered innocently, "a man is licensed to come over and inspect his own property. I thought you'd give me some suggestions about the boulevard."

"Mark!" I cried. "Are you the man who owns all this land? Is there anyone else you'll turn out to be?"

"I hope so, Joan. I hope I'll turn out to be the man you love. But tell me why you ran away when you heard I was Summer Santa Claus. Didn't you want me to be the bidden guest?"

"Yes, Mark. I am glad you are the one who did all those sweet things for the Haphazards. It was darling in you."

"Thank you, Joan. That's the first nice thing you have said to me since I came."

"But, Mark, I had to be alone and think it all over — and try to remember what I wrote. I —"

"Never mind, Joan, I wouldn't take an unfair advantage of what you wrote while under a misapprehension, believing the giver to be an old man to whom you might say such things without being misconstrued."

Really this was quite decent in him.

In spite of my facial efforts I looked guilty, I suppose, for he said quickly: "See here, Joan, did you think all the time, up till now, that Summer Santa Claus was Roger Kane?"

"N-no; not *all* the time!"

"When did you doubt?"

"I don't know."

"When you wrote that letter you didn't mean to send, did you think — "

"Yes," I interrupted, "I did think so then. And that was why I didn't mind so awfully much his reading it."

"When you received his answer — "

"No; I knew then it wasn't; but I never dreamed for a moment that you could write such a letter."

"Why, Joan." he asked wistfully. "Was it so difficult to think I could write a letter that meant what you said it meant to you?"

"Yes; it was, Mark. You were never real with me before — not since we're grown up, anyway."

"I never had the chance, Joan. You would not let me. You always stopped any display of feeling by laughing at me. You've been different since you came here. But tell me, when you felt that Roger Kane didn't write the letter, who did you think — "

"I shall have to read it over again."

"Tell me."

"I really was quite at sea. I fancied it might be some unknown friend of Barry's and Jo's. I was upset and came near run-

ning away to — Alaska. You must remember, Mark, I couldn't possibly think it was you, for I supposed you were ignorant of the existence of the Haphazards."

"That's true," he admitted.

"Tell me," I asked, "how you ever came to think of doing just the right and nicest thing for each of us?"

"Well, you see, Joan, your letters were quite a revelation to me, and to your father too. Until we read them we didn't know, being stupid as men are, how much you had missed in your life or what home life meant to you. Your father really wept when he read about your first birthday cake. Your letters were equally enlightening to me and did me good, even if they did hit pretty hard sometimes. Your dear little note of thanks for the birthday present was my solace though, and I shall always keep it."

"You didn't answer it."

"No, Joan. For once I was wise and didn't answer. When you sent me the picture of 'Little Jumping Joan,' the space between our long ago and now was bridged and nothing could have kept me from coming back to try again. I curbed my impatience

until I could follow out a course of action instead of words and my new siege to your heart via the Haphazards of Mildew Manse. They had been nice to you; you cared for them. I was interested in them. I was lonely off there, it helped pass the time; I saw a way to please you. Oh, hang it all, Joan, I did it because I love you!"

"And," I said, aloud, though really speaking to myself, "I love you because you did it."

I think you can guess what happened then, daddy. You know Mark — how impetuous he is and how quick to seize an opportunity. I was the opportunity.

And do you know, daddy mine, my opposition to Mark as a lover, must have been of as delicate and gossamer a nature as asbestos for when I was — well, seized, it crumbled, no — evaporated.

A straightening out of tangles followed and I learned that Mark had written Barry what to buy and sent a check to cover. He felt that Jo, friend to all lovers, would under the circumstances consent to let him be the unknown benefactor. Mark was in

Seattle when Barry wired about the property and also when he received the invitation and you forwarded him my last letter to you. Somehow he managed to extract hope from my letters except from the parts pertaining to Roger Kane. He came prepared to kidnap me, if necessary. After explanation came future plans, all hurry-up ones, of course, as his always are. These are the plans and he said you would approve them: To be married at once and join you at Nome, and to build a house for three on the Bluffs and live happily ever afterward. He says you are too much of a rover to stay in one place all the time, and that you can come and go. You'll come, and *not* go, won't you, daddy?

It took some time to file my objections and have them overruled. I was quite dumbfounded, though, when the bugle-call for "mess" sounded from across the river.

"Tip must be home, but it can't be dinner-time," I exclaimed, as I took Mark's watch from his pocket. I opened the wrong side and saw therein my picture — the one taken with the kitten. Then there had to

be more — delay. When I did look at the time-face, I saw it was six o'clock.

We returned home in the canoe and towed the raft.

"Hap," I said to the little grinner, as we came into California, "you told where I was!"

"Sure!" he acknowledged. "Didn't we promise to give Summer Santa Claus a good time and entertain him when he came? I think he's a brick!"

"You'll marry him, won't you, Joan?" asked Heck anxiously.

"Of course she will," assured Herk. "Any girl would marry a man that will make it Christmas for her the year around."

"That's just what I'll do, Joan," promised Mark earnestly. "I'll give you anything that you wish, every day."

Barry arrived in time to laugh at these remarks. It was good to see their mutual pleasure. While they were having a small reunion, I managed to slip away to dress for dinner. When I came down stairs it was to the music of the Wedding March which those awful little Haphazards had put on the Victrola. The whole family

surrounded us with congratulations, for Mark had told them everything. He has already caught the Haphazard habit of telling.

They all, except Tippy, approved Mark's plans for an impromptu wedding.

"You never can get a trousseau ready so soon," he said discouragingly.

Mark told him a trousseau would be wasted where we were going and that that far away country would best furnish what I needed.

It is near sunrise of another day, but I had to tell you all, darling daddy, before I could sleep. Happy as I am, it makes me a wee bit sad to think that when I see you, I won't have your name any more, but you'll be just as near and dear. Mark isn't jealous of our love. If he should be, I will get a divorce. It doesn't seem as if I could be married and not have you here, but Mark declares it is your wish. I suppose you thought he had better take me before I changed my mind. We are going to be married at Mildew Manse, and Wilkie will be here to give me away — oh, Daddy! Barry will be best man and Hally, brides-

maid. They all planned it for me. The only outside guests will be Mrs. Munk and Roger Kane.

A whole lot of kisses and — good morning.

JOAN.

P. S. When did I know I loved Mark? I think when he sent me your picture. Maybe I really did love him all the time, and that is why I couldn't fall in love with Jo, Tippecanoe or Barry. I do love him, daddy! I simply adore him.

JOAN.

P. S. No. 2. I told Mark it seemed a pity to close up so remunerative and helpful a business as the Bureau, but he argues that the influence of the Bureau is not good; that it keeps people from thinking and acting for themselves. If I stayed in the business, he said, the public would have fatty degeneration of the brain, and that it was just as harmful as Latin and Greek ponies at school. I hadn't thought of this viewpoint before. Maybe he is right. Barry just shouted when he heard him say

that. He said the men at college always declared Mark should have taken a legal course.

Again, good morning.

JOAN.

P. S. No. 3. I forgot to tell you that after I had come up to my room, those three little wretches stood outside my door and sang: "Every day will be Christmas by and bye."

JOAN.

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